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ERNEST D. BURTON

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CHRISTIAN FAITH FOR MEN OF TODAY

By

EZRA ALBERT COOK, PH.D.

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TO THE MEN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
WHO DESIRE TO LIVE THE IDEAL LIFE
IN THE REAL WORLD

NIGH

PREFACE

This book aims to present the essential truths of historic Christianity in orderly form, in non-technical language, in view of, and in harmony with, those elements of the scientific and religious thought of today which are generally accepted by trained minds. It is intended primarily for use in classes for religious study in college, Young Men's Christian Association, Sunday school, and kindred organizations. It is the result of my experience and work with such classes and has been in process of preparation for more than six years.

It is hoped that it will be found useful to three classes of people. First are the young people who are in process of forming their conceptions of Christianity, and who, being in contact with the intellectual life of the age, must necessarily relate those conceptions to that which they are learning in the realms of history, sociology, and science. Second, among those whom I have in mind are those older members of the Christian church who, having accepted in their youth the current definitions and doctrines of Christian theology, have lately found occasion, perhaps by contact with their children now in process of education, perhaps by reading and reflection, to consider whether some changes of their thought about religion, in

form if not in substance, are not called for by the progress of human thought in various fields of knowledge. And third, it is intended for some people who, intelligent and influential in other departments of thought and life, have remained outside the church, under the impression that the Christian church is falling so far behind the progress of thought in other spheres that one who thinks honestly cannot really accept current Christianity or ally oneself with the church.

Religion is not wholly an affair of the intellect; it is even more a matter of will and life. But Christianity has its intellectual side, and clear and strong thinking ought to issue, and in the long run and in the large, always does issue, not in negations, but in positive convictions, and through them in larger and richer life.

While I am indebted to very many books and minds for the development of my own theological thought and for assistance in the composition of this book, I may mention three men to whom my thanks are especially due. President W. Douglass Mackenzie, of Hartford Theological Seminary, was my teacher in theology and is my dear friend. Professor William Adams Brown, of Union Seminary, was exceedingly kind in reading through the manuscript of this book, in earlier forms, twice, and in offering many very helpful suggestions. Mr. Frederick M. Harris, editor of publications of

the International Committee of the Young Men's Christian Association, also read the manuscript in an earlier form and in its final revision, and his encouragement and advice on many points have been of great value.

I shall greatly appreciate any sympathetic criticism or suggestion for improvement of a future edition which any careful student of this book may send to me, and it goes forth with the earnest hope that God may use it for the strengthening of the church of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom in the hearts of all men.

E. Albert Cook

Congregational College of Canada, Montreal
April, 1913

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CHAPTER I

IS CHRISTIANITY THE BEST RELIGION?

"Let no man lead you astray: he that doeth righteousness is righteous."—I John 3:7.

1. **Religion is man's consciousness of relation to his larger environment,** (*a*) **his feeling of relation to God** (**or nature or the universe**) **and to humanity;** (*b*) **his thought about these relations and their consequences, and** (*c*) **the action resulting from this feeling and belief.**—This definition differs from many familiar ones, especially in two ways. First, it recognizes the participation of the whole nature of man, emotions, intellect, and will, whereas many have thought that religion belonged to one of these three phases of human nature, to the partial or complete exclusion of the others. Secondly, this definition recognizes the essential place in religion of man's relation to humanity at large, as a part of his environment.

This definition includes all forms of religion, even atheistic forms such as the original Buddhism, which it was very difficult to include in a definition which made religion the worship of a god or gods. It also recognizes that all men are religious, even those who have nothing to do with religious organizations or ceremonies. For every man feels

some relation to the rest of reality, whether he thinks of that as fate, or the All, or some good or evil spirits, or the God and Father of Jesus Christ. For instance, the man whose life is absorbed in money-making has a feeling that he is taking the best way to obtain the greatest power over the earth and man and get the most out of life. His real religious faith is made in view of that feeling and his action is consistent with it. So too the materialist who believes in no spiritual force behind and in the universe, but nevertheless devotes perhaps his whole wealth and energy to the improvement of the condition of his fellow-men, is seen to be religious—indeed, we shall come to see that he has a very good form of religion, although far from the best.

We are justified in including the consciousness of relation to humanity as an important element in religion, philosophically by the fact that especially when nature is viewed mechanically as the automatic expression of inviolable laws, the *significant* part of the universe to which relationship is felt is *humanity;* and this feeling with the thought and action which go with it may take the place which would otherwise be taken by feeling of relation to superhuman powers. This definition is also justified historically, as we find that the relationship of each man to other men, at least others who are associated with him in the same

form of religion, is an essential part of historical religions, and that the *highest* forms lay the *most* stress on the necessity of right relations with men. The highest form of religion may therefore be defined with Professor E. T. Harper as "life flowing from love to God and fellow-men."

As a matter of fact, no other religion has attained to such a high idea of God and noble conception of man, or been developed in such harmonious and helpful relation to the three phases of man's nature, feeling, thought, and action, as Christianity. It is in Christianity that the highest ideal of religion has been reached, and most largely realized, and this will appear as we consider that ideal and measure essential Christianity by it, in the following pages.

A helpful conception of the nature of religion is that it is the search for friends in the universe. For every man instinctively desires to be in friendly relations with the rest of reality, and friendship can obtain, in its higher forms, only between personal beings. Hence the universal tendency to think of the powers of nature, the great factors that determine one's fortune and destiny as being, or being controlled by, a great person or persons, a god or gods. All religion in its earlier forms believes that there are such friendly beings with which man can come into contact. Pantheism and atheism are in every case later developments

to which some men have thought themselves forced by their reason. The worship of unfriendly or evil spirits or gods is rightly regarded as either a degradation or a counterfeit of religion and not a true or natural development.

2. The best religion, from the standpoint of the individual, is that which is of the greatest assistance in the development and enjoyment of all his powers, or which leads to the most satisfying life. From the standpoint of society, it is that which has the strongest tendency to make men helpful to each other or righteous.—The truth of the first part of this thesis is self-evident. Some may question, however, whether religion has to do with all phases and powers of life, and especially whether it may not be necessary, in order to develop and enjoy the higher and nobler powers, or to enjoy the life of happiness after the earthly life is over, that one should deny himself other enjoyments. Different forms of religion have emphasized one interest of human life, and neglected others or taught that the others must be quite abandoned if the more important were to be truly attained. It must be evident, however, that if it were possible to enjoy physical health, the various normal exercises and pleasures of mortal life, and of the life *after* the death of the body, and at the same time to attain the highest development of the spiritual life—that is, of character—a religion which enabled a man

to do this would be better than one which enabled him to do only part of this. Christianity in its highest form holds that these various forms of individual satisfaction are all mutually consistent, indeed, that they are all bound up together, so that no one can enjoy one phase of life in the best way without the development of the other phases; and so far as our experience goes Christianity has been more successful in thus promoting the larger life of the individual than any other form of religion.

The truth of the second part of this thesis—that is, that from the standpoint of society that religion is best which best helps men to become righteous—will be seen when in section 6 we consider the meaning of righteousness, and see that the righteous life is just that life which is most helpful to others, and therefore most useful to men.

3. Christianity has satisfied at the same time the needs of the individual and of society as no other religion has done, and thus harmonized and united the elements which in other religions have always remained more or less antagonistic.—A complete demonstration of this thesis would of course require the study of the whole history of the world and all of the forms of religion which have existed. But for practical purposes we may make our study much narrower. Since there is a powerful incentive for mankind to retain what it finds to be most useful, and social change is in

general progressive, advancing, although with many temporary and local failures, we shall be safe in assuming that the best elements in the religions of the past have been preserved to the present, and we may therefore confine our attention to those forms of religion which affect larger masses of men at the present time.

The great forms of religion at the present time are Buddhism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism. Confucianism is more a system of moral and political teaching than a religion, and its influence in China is now rapidly decaying. It is there united with various forms of religion, none of which can be considered as comparable with Christianity in value except Buddhism. Hinduism is a name for a multitude of different forms of religion, which while having common elements are without true unity. It cannot, therefore, come into comparison.

Buddhism exists in different forms and has been corrupted in various ways. As taught by its founder, Gautama, it was probably in its best form and contained much that was good and true, especially in its teachings with regard to the virtuous life. Gautama taught that no help or salvation could be expected from any god, and that the salvation which man needed could be reached only by the cessation of all desire. This state must be reached by everyone for himself, unaided by anyone else. Thus original and eso-

teric Buddhism was practically atheistic. Later forms have worshiped Gautama, the founder, as a god, or have introduced the worship of other deities, but have not changed the general ideal of life and salvation.

The Buddhistic view of life is that it is evil, to be gotten rid of as soon as possible, not by suicide—that would only prolong it in other, perhaps less desirable, incarnations—but by the extinction of the desire to live. The highest state which the Buddhist hopes to reach is that of the Nirvana, a condition of dreamless sleep—impossible definitely to distinguish from non-existence. In the meanwhile a man should treat his fellows kindly and rightly. But the path to the Nirvana is only for the few who give up their interest in life and its activities; and the many have for the present only a partial interest in religion and do not attain to the salvation which it offers. Aside from this highest form, there are many corruptions and superstitions in the doctrine and practice of Buddhism, and the life of the people who adhere to it is so manifestly inferior to that of Christians that a fair comparison can lead to only one conclusion as to which is better.

Mohammedanism, when it arose, was a distinct advance upon the forms of religion and morals which it superseded, among the roving tribes of Arabia, but its faith and life have been inseparably

connected with faith in the Koran as a divine revelation of absolute authority in all respects. Thus it has stood against progress everywhere and does so today. The place which it gives to women in this life, whether in monogamous or polygamous conditions, is far inferior to man's, and they are believed to have no souls and to cease to exist when the body dies. There is no place in the religion for children, while they are children. It has some good teaching both moral and religious, but both are far inferior to that of Christianity, particularly in its Protestant forms, and a comparison of the life yielded by Mohammedanism and Christianity leaves no question as to which is superior. Mohammedanism propagates itself more by the power of the sword than by the appeal to reason and conscience, and justifies the ruthless slaughter of those who do not accept it.

This glance at the only important world-rivals of Christianity, which should be supplemented by study of books referred to in the notes, shows that neither of them can be looked to as containing even the fundamental principles of the best religion in a form definite enough to serve as foundations for the development of the best religion, without giving up their primary characteristics as historic systems. On the other hand, as we shall see in succeeding sections, Christianity has had in it, from the beginning, the fundamental principles of

that religion which must be the best and the final one for humanity, and these principles must be regarded as constituting its real essence, and therefore be used to distinguish it from errors and corruptions which have been associated with many of its historic forms.

4. Social and historical forms are essential to the existence and development of religion, and the best form of religion can be most surely found by the study of historical religions, and therefore especially by the study of the highest form, Christianity.—No sensible man undertakes to become expert in any line of study or labor in which men have been engaged for centuries, without acquainting himself with the highest results which others have hitherto achieved. So no sensible man will undertake, even if it were possible, to invent or discover the best form of religion without first finding out the highest forms which have been reached in the history of men. Every building must be constructed from the ground up, and every advance must commence at the point which has been *attained*. We may well question whether any particular form of Christianity now adhered to by large masses of people is in all respects true and ideal. If it were, we should have a right to expect that the people would be perfect in character, or at least far nearer perfection than any group with which we are acquainted.

But the only way in which the ideal religion can possibly be reached is by the patient and progressive perfecting of the best that we have, by the emphasizing of that which proves itself most useful and true, and the gradual elimination of elements whose value has been but temporary, and which have been outgrown. Such a process of growth and development belongs to true religion, and results from its own nature and vitality, and is one of the most remarkable characteristics of Christianity.

The question has been raised whether one form of religion can be best for all men, or whether one form may not be better for one race or nation or class, and a considerably different form better for another race, nation, or class. No doubt there is a sense in which the latter is the case. But just as there is but one true science of electricity for all men, however differently electrical apparatus may be used in different places and conditions, and just as true food is nourishing to all human beings, even though from various causes the diet and the appetite of one man will differ from those of another, so the needs and elements of human nature are everywhere fundamentally the same; and the best religion for one man will probably be the best religion for every other man, although different elements in it will be of greater value and importance in the one case than in the other,

and the understanding of it will be much less complete for one man than for another.

If, then, the best religion is one which shall best meet the needs of all races and classes, we may be most confident that we have found the best religion, or that from which the best religion must be developed, if we find that historical form which has met the needs of masses of men of all classes and conditions in the best way and this we cannot doubt to be historical Christianity.

If we admit that Christianity has some error connected with it in its historical forms, and that other great religions contain some of the good elements of Christianity, it may be thought that after all they should be treated as equals, and that we should simply urge the emphasis of the important and rejection of the false in each case, but not ask anyone to give up another form for Christianity. This is not the right attitude. It may be that one form of religion has accepted elements of good which belong also to other religions, but that its essential features may so obscure these good elements as to prevent them from ever attaining their true place and right emphasis in the lives of its adherents. This brings us to the question as to what the essence of a religion is. Our answer relates to founded religions, particularly, but as the great religions of the world, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity,

all belong to this class, it will apply to them all. We hold, then, that the essence of a religion is that character or those features, manifest in its founding and preserved in its history, which by their value and vitality give power to the religion to reform and purify itself and adapt itself to both the permanent and the changing elements in human life. We have briefly considered the two rivals of Christianity from this standpoint of their essential form. We now have to consider Christianity very briefly in the same way. Of course the succeeding chapters in the book are taken up with the explanation and confirmation of the details of Christian faith as they have been developed up to the present time.

5. Jesus in his own life and teaching presented the life of largest development and satisfaction for the individual.—This appears from the accounts which we have in the Gospels, both positively and negatively. He did not teach nor practice asceticism, although he did teach the life of self-sacrifice and self-denial. But almost all of his recorded acts are those of promoting the health or enjoyment of others. He did not avoid feasts nor say much of fasting. He enjoyed and approved of home life and of children and in no way suggested that a life of seclusion in cell or monastery was desired by God. The relations which he sustained and taught his disciples to hold to all men were

determined by the highest emotion, love. In the Beatitudes he points out the way to the happy life. In his warning against anxiety, worry, and covetousness, he was showing the way to peace and contentment of mind, conducive to the healthiest mental and physical life. He says very little about the life after death, and is mainly concerned not with that but with mortal life itself. In the Fourth Gospel he is represented as especially concerned with giving life to men, and many expressions emphasize this idea: "I came that they may have life, and that they may have it abundantly"; "I am the bread of life"; "Ye will not come to me that ye may have life"; "I am the way and the truth and the life."

6. Jesus taught that righteousness is the most important element in the life of the individual and of society, that it is of fundamental value for God and man.—A man acts righteously or rightly when he does what he would want everyone else to do under similar circumstances. This definition of righteousness was first clearly stated in substantially this form by the great philosopher Kant, although it was probably understood by Socrates, two thousand years earlier. Jesus taught it in the form we know as the Golden Rule, and all of his teachings are consistent with it. Confucius also stated it in a negative form, but did not realize its truth in the positive form in which

Jesus taught it. The great value of this definition is that everyone who understands it will agree that it is correct, although from its nature it will be applied differently in specific cases by different people.

Apart from some of the teachings of Jesus about the "last things," the judgment, second coming, etc., which we shall have to consider later, his recorded sayings are mainly concerned with two things: the explanation of and exhortation to the righteous life, and the presentation of a spiritual idea of the kingdom of heaven in place of the prevailing materialistic idea of it. He taught that the essence of righteousness is love, and that God, who is perfectly righteous, requires his children to be perfect as he is. He saw beneath the outward actions to the inward motive, and judged man by the latter. The greatest commandment is to love God (this perfectly righteous Being) with all of one's nature, and the second, like to the first in importance and in character, is to love one's neighbor as oneself—that is, one cannot love God truly without loving one's neighbor also truly. Such love to one's fellows, as he taught and exemplified it, was the fundamental principle of the righteousness which he demanded, and a moment's thought will make it clear that he was right; for this principle of action from loving motives would be immediately

derivable from the definition of righteousness which we have agreed upon. How remarkable it was that Jesus had this clear perception of the nature of righteousness, when the current teaching of his day and his people was so different, need not here be dwelt upon.

Although, as we have seen, Jesus did not teach asceticism, he did insist upon righteousness and love to others, with all that that involved of self-sacrifice, self-denial, and self-restraint, as the first condition of God's approval and man's happiness and welfare. Righteousness—love for others shown by word and deed—and not any particular form of ceremony or creed, was the test, in the great judgment scene which he so dramatically pictured as the time of decision of the fate of men and nations.

The teaching of Jesus about the kingdom of heaven shows that this kingdom was something to be progressively realized on earth by men governed by the spirit of love to God and one another. It was not primarily an ideal for the life after death, but something that was already coming in the experiences of his disciples and was to spread from them like the yeast in the three measures of meal. Thus Jesus united in his faith and teaching the ideal of individual satisfaction, social harmony, and divine perfection, the highest appeal to the intellect, feelings, and will.

Righteousness and love were the key words in all three.

7. The authority to which Jesus appealed was always that of the reason and the conscience, and whenever tradition, even the most sacred, conflicted with these, he did not hesitate to forsake tradition.—Tradition in religion opposes truth and progress in two ways. First, it often conflicts with the truth about right conduct. The religion of a hundred years ago approved or at any rate did not condemn certain kinds of action which are now seen to have evil results, and therefore to be morally wrong. Then, these results may not have been apparent, and the action may have been so much of an improvement over previous action as to be right at that time. But now the man who receives the religion, and with it the views of right and wrong of a hundred years ago, must choose between this teaching of religious tradition and the voice of his conscience. The general approval of slavery in the United States a century ago is an instance of religious tradition which came to be in conflict with conscience. We should understand that tradition indicates any teaching or custom which is "handed down" from one generation to another, whether true or false, and that it may be very good, as in the case of the Bible. The danger is that it may be held sacred and right

because it has come down from previous ages, instead of because it is confirmed by reason and conscience.

The second way in which tradition often opposes truth is with respect to teaching concerned directly with religious belief or ceremonial. For example, a certain creed expressed, a hundred years ago, the highest thought of man about God, and a certain ceremonial form seemed most suitable to the true worship of God. Now, the language and ideas of people have changed in many important respects and the creed of that day is not and cannot be understood in the same way as it was then. In certain ways, also, our ideas of God are clearer and higher now than then, so that the creed has not now the intrinsic authority of its appeal to reason and conscience that it had. But tradition insists on its acceptance on the implicit ground of the authority which it formerly had, not recognizing that the basis of that authority has passed away.

Jesus' constant appeal to the reason and conscience is reflected with special emphasis in the Fourth Gospel, where the words "true" and "truth" recur so frequently. He appealed to the evidence of his works, to the witness that God bore to him (how else than by his Spirit in their minds and hearts, making the truth plain to those who would receive it?); and when he appealed to the Scrip-

tures for confirmation of the truth of his words it was either to point out the inconsistency of those who found fault with him while they professed the greatest reverence for the Scriptures, or to quote some passage the truth of which was evident quite apart from the authority of its source. He said that he came to fulfil the Scriptures, but, interpreting those words by his life, we must find them to mean that he was to show the deeper and truer meaning of them by his life and teaching, rejecting or revising that in them which was only temporary in its value.

Jesus' rejection or revision, not only of the teachings of the scribes and rabbis but also of the Scriptures when they came into conflict with truth and right, is illustrated in his teaching about marriage and divorce, about "Korban," about ceremonial defilement in eating with unwashed hands or eating meats that were ceremonially unclean. It is shown also in his reinterpretation of old commandments in the Sermon on the Mount where he goes from the outward act to the inward motive. "Ye have heard that it hath been said"—that was the authority of tradition—"but I say unto you"—that was not merely an appeal to his own authority, but rather his interpretation of the will of God enforced by an appeal to their own perception of how God actually works in the world.

8. Since the characteristic features of the life and teaching of Jesus have remained vital in Christianity and are the principles of the best religion, Christianity must be in essence the best and the final religion.—We have seen in the last sections that the principles of the life and teaching of Jesus are those of the best religion, the one giving largest satisfaction to the intellect, emotions, and will of the individual and having the strongest tendency to make men righteous. A study of church history would show that these principles were effective in the early organization of the church and development of its systems of teaching; that, although they have often been lost sight of by the ecclesiastical authorities and perhaps the larger body of adherents of the church, they have yet survived in the minds and hearts of a "remnant" at all times and come into prominence in the lives and teachings of the great prophets and reformers of the church from time to time. They were the underlying principles of the great reformation which commenced in the sixteenth century, and are again today being understood more clearly than ever before.

It is of great importance to note that, however these principles have been lost from view for a time in the history of the church, there never was a time when the life and words of Jesus were not regarded, theoretically at least, as of fundamental

value to the church. And the fact that the Gospels have from the first century preserved this picture of Jesus and record of his words in which these principles are so evident has made a reformation and purification of Christian life and doctrine possible and often inevitable. They have thus been the vital principles of Christianity throughout its history. And by this history the practical value or "workableness" of these principles has been shown.

A comparison of the moral, intellectual, and social conditions in countries dominated by Roman Catholicism (in which form of Christianity these principles have been much less clearly recognized and effective than in Protestantism, and in which the authority of tradition and of the hierarchy and papacy have often been opposed to the authority of reason and conscience), with corresponding conditions in countries where Protestant Christianity has more largely determined conditions, and in which these principles have been much more completely recognized, will be a very strong argument for the value of these principles and the view that Protestantism is much truer to the spirit and essence of Christianity than Romanism.

Granting that Christianity is the best religion that the world knows, the question may still be raised by some whether it may not some time be

superseded by another still better. It would be very unwise in the face of history, even of Christian history, to predict permanence for any detailed system of doctrine. Although in the following pages we give in reasonable detail the elements which seem to flow from the fundamental principles of the best religion, as they have been developed within Christianity up to the present time, it is not with the thought that no modification of any of them will be found necessary in the future, but rather that they fairly state the highest positions that have yet been reached, and, by the criticism of careful thought and the testing of time, will lead to still clearer views of truth in the future.

But we have found Christianity to be in essence identical with the best religion, and that its essential principles have proved their value and applicability to human nature as it is for nearly two thousand years. We must therefore hold that this essential Christianity is the highest and best religion and destined to be permanent and final.

If it be granted that Christianity is the highest form of religion to which the world has attained, and that its essence is that of the best conceivable religion, we may also say that the final religion must be continuous with Christianity as we now have it, in substance of doctrine and spirit if not in form of organization. It must be *our* Christianity perfected according to its true nature, as

the child when it develops rightly matures into the perfect man or woman. For, as has been noted in section 4, the religion of the future must always be built upon that of the present—there can never be a gap in the development. This is a reason for patience with the slow-changing forms of Christianity which we know today and the faithful effort to develop them rightly from within rather than to break away from them and organize new forms which would embody the truth in a purer and more complete way. Such breaks are sometimes necessary, but the scandalous multiplicity of Christian sects and all the evils of sectarian strife and misunderstanding show that there is a very serious danger in such impatience with the slower progress of established organizations. The great movements of today toward the reuniting of Christian organizations are one of the proofs of the presence in them of the spirit of truth and love.

Christianity possesses two concrete elements whose value for its growth and permanence is of immense and peculiar value. The first is the person and teaching of Jesus as described in the New Testament. The central place in Buddhism of Gautama and in Mohammedanism of Mahomet is in many respects similar to that of Jesus in Christianity. But while in the case of the two first-named forms, adherence to the principles

and ideals of the founder must ever prevent the attainment of the best religion, in the case of Christianity the life and teachings of its founder are still far beyond what has been practically realized and attained in the history of the religion which he founded, and are of such a nature that we cannot conceive of them being susperseded or surpassed. Abstract principles are always in danger of being lost in the forms in which they are stated or in the minds of those who have not learned to grasp or to value principles in abstract form. But a definite, divine, heroic figure, with a name and history easily grasped, whose life illustrates such abstract principles in ways readily understood by the simplest and most unlearned, is of inestimable value in the maintenance of such principles as living forces among men.

The second concrete element making for the permanence of Christianity is the Bible. Again we may compare it with Islam, i.e., Mohammedanism, which in place of the Bible has the Koran. The latter, while of great and positive value at the time it was written, to the people whose religious beliefs and practices had been decidedly lower than those it inculcated, has nevertheless been an absolute hindrance to growth and progress among those who held it sacred. The Bible, on the other hand, has had a most favorable influence on progress in every line, and when rightly used should continue to do so in the future as well as,

or even better than, in the past. The peculiar value, nature, and proper use of the Bible are considered in the next chapters.

In order that we may be able to distinguish the permanent, valuable, and true elements in Christian faith from temporary or erroneous forms or elements which in the course of history have become associated with it, we shall need to consider further some principles for the testing of religious teaching, and the basis for our confidence that we may come to the real truth in our study. This is done in the remaining sections of this chapter.

9. **Religious teachings with regard to facts or principles, which cannot be verified through the senses or the personal experience of the individual, belong to the realm of faith, and should be distinguished from those which are thus verifiable and so belong to the realm of knowledge in the technical sense.**—By knowledge in the technical sense we mean those opinions as to facts and principles which a man cannot doubt when the proper evidence has been presented to him—in the acceptance of the truth of which a man has no choice. When we once understand them, we cannot doubt the truth of mathematics and logic, the so-called formal sciences. They, however, give us no information about any particular things, but enable us to use such information

rightly only when we have obtained it in other ways. Aside from these formal sciences, all knowledge comes to us through our senses, or from our immediate consciousness of our own feelings or other experiences. I cannot doubt the real existence of the impressions of sight and sound, smell, touch, etc., and of feelings of comfort or pain, and the thoughts that pass through my mind in dreams or waking hours. Practically, I cannot doubt the existence of the objects of my sense-experiences, of the chair which I see, the typewriter which I hear, and the tooth which aches.

There are many things which belong to the *realm* of knowledge which I know only indirectly, but they are things which I might know, or, might have known directly if I had been in the position of other human beings whose knowledge of them was immediate, and from whom my knowledge comes. For instance, I know that there is a city Jerusalem, although I have not yet seen it. But I have the best reason to believe that I might see it if I took the time and trouble and could meet the expense. My evidence of its existence comes to me still through my senses, although it is not direct. The books I read, and the things I hear from people whom my eyes see, give me evidence that there is such a city, and I am practically compelled to believe it just as certainly by this indirect evidence as if I saw the

city myself. And even if the evidence were not absolutely convincing, the matter would still belong to the *realm* of knowledge. Suppose I had only the report of the author of some old book on the subject. If I had good reason to believe that the book was authentic and the author truthful, I should still believe it as fully as if a hundred men had witnessed to its existence. If I had doubts about the book or its author I might doubt the existence of the city for that reason; but my opinion about it is still dependent on the evidence which comes to my senses, and not on my choice, and further evidence might settle the matter for me one way or the other. In the same way I know that a man named Jesus lived in Palestine many years ago. I cannot absolutely verify his existence by my senses now, but have, nevertheless, evidence through them that if I had been in Palestine at the right time I might have seen him with my own eyes, and heard his voice with my own ears.

We should understand that a matter may belong to the realm of knowledge even though our own opinion about it may be erroneous. One man may believe that the city of Troy as described by Homer and Virgil really existed, and another that it never really existed. So far as the opinions have any value at all, they are founded on evidence presented to the senses of the men holding them,

and are in each case held involuntarily—not because the men wish to hold them, but because the evidence of their senses seems to warrant their opinions. If the evidence could be made complete and perfect, both men would be compelled to come to the same opinion and that the right one.

We should understand that, as to knowledge of our own thoughts and feelings, what we cannot doubt is that we *have* them—we can doubt whether or not they are *true*. For instance, I know that I have had a certain dream. But I cannot *know* that it represents any truth with regard to present or future conditions in the outer world, just because I have dreamt it. If I believe that it does, that is a matter of faith and not knowledge. So I may know that certain events have happened after my prayer, and may *believe* that they happened because God heard my prayer, but my belief with regard to God is a matter of faith and not of knowledge. A man who does not doubt my account of my prayer and the events which followed may nevertheless doubt the existence of God.

Faith, then, is the conviction which a man arrives at as an interpretation of experience, but which itself cannot be absolutely established by the senses or any personal experience. When all the evidences which my senses could receive had been presented, I might still hold that some other explanation of the existence of the universe was the

true one, than that it was to be explained by the existence of a God such as the Christian believes in. The view which I hold is not so involuntary as in the case of sense-knowledge. It is dependent on the significance which I attribute to certain experiences above other experiences, and the value which the one opinion has for me above the other. All theories of science as well as religion which are used to explain and to handle facts and experiences, but cannot be fully confirmed by the senses or personal experience of the individual, belong to the realm of faith in this technical sense. All the most important teachings of religion belong to the realm of faith and not of knowledge.

Some people distinguish between religious belief and faith, making the latter personal trust or confidence and commitment to God. The question is here one of the use of words. Every author has the right to use his terms in the way which seems to him best, provided he makes his meaning plain. The use which is made of these terms in this book is here defined and should be clearly understood. It is quite true that a man may hold certain opinions about God, corresponding to those of Christianity, without having a personal trust in God, and being a real Christian. We should say, however, that such an attitude is possible only when such opinions are held only part of the time, and in a weak way; and that it

is impossible for a man *constantly* to believe the Christian teaching about God, without the personal commitment of self to him which some would denote by the term faith.

When it is seen that a man cannot be certain of the truth of religion (in the sense of being compelled to believe its teachings and unable to doubt them, or to accept alternative theories in explanation of his experience), there is danger that a man will say: Then I can never be sure of having the true religion, and need not concern myself about it; no one can require me to have any particular religious faith, since he cannot prove that it is true. But this would be a very foolish position. We could do hardly anything of consequence in this world without acting on faith, that is, on theories the truth of which can never be demonstrated to the senses. And the theories of religion are the most important ones for life which a man can hold, and while they never become knowledge in the technical sense, their truth may yet be made so clear as to make their acceptance the only sensible thing for a man to do. The tests and principles of religious faith are further made clear in the following sections.

10. A religious faith should be reasonable, that is, its elements should not contradict each other or the testimony of the senses or the facts of human experience.—Two statements which con-

tradict each other cannot both be true. Therefore, as we are looking for a true faith, we must strive to get rid of contradiction in its various parts. This may seem so evident as not to be worth mentioning, but as a matter of fact probably the faith of most people involves more or less contradiction which is not recognized. A man believes one thing at one time, and another contradictory thing at another; and because he does not think of both at the same time and compare them, he does not realize that one of them must be false. Thus contradictions have even crept into certain forms of Christian teaching, and sometimes been maintained there in spite of evident incompatibility, the difficulty being overcome by calling it a mystery beyond the reach of human reason. While there is a great deal of truth which is beyond the reach of human reason, it does no one any good to try to believe what evidently cannot be true.

It should also be clear that a good faith should not contradict our experiences. We may believe something about the future which is very different from anything which we experience at present. The fact that we have not experienced a thing in no wise proves that we may not experience it in the future, or that others may not have experienced it in the past. But we should not deny in our faith that which we know to be true in our experience. For example, Christian Science denies

the existence of pain, sin, disease, and death. In so far it is not a good faith, for we know that these things exist, and to say that they do not, involves at the best mental confusion, for everyone knows that what we mean by these terms does exist. Indeed, the chief appeal which Christian Science makes for acceptance is to the fact that pain and disease are cured by its ministrations, and thus it acknowledges in practice what it denies in theory. We cannot doubt that Christian Science has good and truth in it, for our *senses* confirm its claims to have relieved pain and disease in certain cases, and to have aided people to come to peace and contentment from conditions of worry and anxiety. We must say that this good comes from elements of truth and value in it, and not from its contradictions, and that it would be a much better faith if it were so corrected as to be truly reasonable. Truth is one. There can be no real contradiction in it anywhere, and to deny the truth that we receive through the senses in our daily experience is to brand our minds as altogether unreliable and to assert that we can never be sure that any thought which we have is true. In science and all other departments of life we demand that thought be reasonable. Religious faith must meet and accede to the same demand if it would supply the needs of modern life.

11. **The instinct which makes us accept the faith which gives the deepest personal satisfaction, or hold our highest ideals to be real, is worthy of confidence and leads to the best faith.**—We are constantly exercising our judgment in choice between the various experiences possible to us, the various things offered to us, and selecting those which seem to us best. The food that tastes best, the music that pleases most, the friend who is most congenial—these we all prefer and take if we can get. It is not otherwise with faith. When we are in health of body and mind we put the best interpretation upon life which we can, and the better the interpretation, the more we enjoy the life. But this interpretation of life in its widest sweep is religious faith; and the acceptance of that interpretation of life which yields the greatest satisfaction to the mind, the feelings, and the conscience is the holding of our highest ideals to be real. But the very fact that this religious faith or this theory of life gives us what we desire is strongest evidence of its truth, just as the truth of any theory is confirmed by the attainment, through its application, of results sought for.

In individual cases circumstances will prevent the recognition of that which is best in any department of life. Tastes are formed and habits established, prejudices accepted, in early life, which make the recognition of that which is really

better, difficult or impossible in later life. In religion the conservative elements are perhaps stronger than in any other region of thought and interest, but here too life and growth will always show themselves by choosing the better when it can be made plain that it is better.

12. **The social value of the best faith, that is, its power to make men righteous, is a guaranty of its truth.**—"No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself." My life is immeasurably affected by the lives of other men, and affects them probably more than I imagine. As we have seen, the inmost meaning of righteousness is that character which acts from love to others. It needs no argument to show that it will be best for me to have others righteous in character, i.e., loving toward me, and best for others if I shall be righteous, loving toward them. As the best interests of each demand that all the rest shall be righteous, so evidently the religion which has the strongest tendency to make men righteous will have the greatest social value. If there is any such unity in the spiritual world as in the physical, then we should hold that that theory which is the best for all in general is also best for each in particular, and that it is not only best for me that everyone else should be righteous but also that I myself should be. The laws of physics, chemistry, biology, and the other sciences are universal—

apply equally to all—and no man can gain by ignoring for himself the rules that he recognizes to be applicable to others. We are justified, then, in saying that the rule which works best for society will work best for each individual, and the faith which has the greatest social value will be finally the same as that which has the greatest individual value. The fact of such value, then, is the evidence of its truth, just as in the case of every theory the evidence of the truth of the theory is in giving such an explanation of experience as to enable us to gain for the future the desired results in experience. The final proof of faith lies in its value. The key is true if it unlocks the door. The road is right if it brings the man home. The lamp is real if it dispels the darkness. The faith is firm-founded if it transfigures the life.

The two tests of faith which are most practical and easy to apply are those of reasonableness and tendency to make men righteous. While we need not neglect the other elements of personal satisfaction, we shall be more independent of individual error and variation if we consider mainly the intellectual and social value of an article of faith, assuming that that which is reasonable and helps toward righteousness will also yield the greatest satisfaction to each individual.

13. Everyone is bound to accept the best faith he can find.—It is just as truly a man's duty to

believe in God, if that can be shown to be the best faith, as for him to pay his just debts, or work honestly for his living. All must admit that there is such a thing as duty, and that the sum of all duties is to do absolutely right. The duty to do right carries with it the duty to use all proper means within one's power to help one to do right. The mightiest power to help a man to do right is that of true religious faith. This is one implication of the famous doctrine of Protestantism which Luther received from Paul, "justification by faith"; namely, that right faith directs and transforms life.

If circumstances should arise so that it is clearly my duty to get from Chicago to New York as soon as possible, and I have physical power to go on foot, and money to pay my fare on the fastest train, it is clearly my duty to take the train. It is no excuse to say that I am doing my duty if I start out on foot and run as fast as I can. So whatever I take to be my duty to my fellow-men, to be the completely righteous life for me, I am not doing my duty if I strive to live this righteous life without religious faith, for with that faith I might make much more rapid progress in the righteous life.

Let it again be noted that by our definition the best faith is one which *can be accepted*. It is one which is reasonable and against which no proof (I do not say no evidence, but no *proof*) can be

brought. No man can be required by his duty to do that which is impossible, and one impossible thing for an intelligent man is to hold that to be true which his mind pronounces false. We realize that the human mind is very liable to error, and that it is both possible for an intelligent, even a learned, man to hold that to be unreasonable which is really reasonable, and to maintain the reasonableness of that which really involves contradiction and error. It remains true, however, that each man must use his own reason and moral judgment to direct his life, and experience justifies us in holding that this individual judgment, honestly exercised, will not lead men into ever-greater diversity of faith and life, but rather to ever more harmonious and lofty faith and life.

The principles of religious faith set forth in this book are presented to be carefully considered by each individual and accepted in so far as they are found to be reasonable and helpful. The author believes them to be substantially the highest views of Christian teaching as it has been revealed through Christ and the experience of the church from his day to the present, but that in the future they will doubtless be still further improved in some ways.

From whatever point of view our religious beliefs are considered, whether as an attainment of man or a revelation of God, it must be recognized

that they have been acquired only gradually. Geometry was not always known as it is today. Before anything like our geometry was known to the world, certain geometrical relations were perceived more or less clearly by the artisans and builders of early ages. Although their knowledge was very imperfect, it would have been only folly to have rejected it for that reason. In so far as it enabled men to build successfully, it was not only useful but true, although mixed with imperfection or error. So today we must accept the highest form of religious faith which has been and can be attained, although acknowledging that further development and growth is still probable.

An objection to the method of determining the substance of religious faith—of finding that which is true and that which contains error in Christian teaching—which has been explained in the preceding sections, will occur to many earnest Christians. They might say that it ignores God and his revelation, without which we cannot come to divine truth; that it is subjective, individualistic; that the result will be a man-made God, instead of a self-revealed God, for man to worship and obey. These objections will be seen to be groundless as we proceed with our study, but it will be well to give a brief answer to them here in order, if possible, to remove any prejudice to further study.

The religious interpretation of the method we have outlined is a thoroughly biblical and Christian one; it is the principle of the guidance of man by the Spirit of God, or the immanence of God in the minds and hearts of men. The Bible teaches that the Spirit of God is the "light that lighteth every man coming into the world"; that the breath of life breathed into man at his creation, or the image of God in which he made man, is his reason and conscience, those divine powers in him, through which God reveals to him his truth and wins him to himself. These powers of reason and conscience or moral judgment which we have made the tests for every man of religious truth are the only conceivable means by which God *could* reveal his truth to men; and every honest search for those principles which ennoble life and develop in character that marvelous fruit of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" is evidence of the revealing and inspiring activity of the Holy Spirit. And the Christian should hold this to be true even where the person in whom these forces are active has at first no clear faith in God. It is not less God's activity because it is not recognized as such.

At the same time our method is not open to the objection that it begs the question at the start, assuming the faith for which it proposes to present the evidence. The validity of our method does

not depend on this religious interpretation, but should appeal to every honest, serious person who desires the fullest life for himself and the best character for the sake of others, whatever be the state of his religious faith or lack of faith at the start.

CHAPTER II

THE VALUE OF THE BIBLE AS A WRITTEN REVELATION

"Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness."—II Tim. 3:16.

14. The Bible is the most valuable collection of religious writings which the world possesses, and meets the need which man feels of a real and definite knowledge of the character of God and his relations with mankind.—"Oh, that I knew where I might find him" is the cry of man all over the world, and especially of him who is in trouble and believes that God might help him out if he could be found and properly appealed to. In every known form of religion it has been thought that such knowledge of God or of the ultimate reality back of the universe was at hand either in common possession or among the priests or religious leaders. In order that religious faith may be strong, those who hold it must be confident that the truth which they hold has been revealed to men in the past or present in a clear and definite way. But knowing that each form of religion makes such claims for its system, and that as they differ greatly from each other, they cannot all be true, we seek to know whether any form of religion can justify

these claims in a way which will be superior to all others, and will satisfy the need of the most intelligent and educated, as well as the ignorant and humble, at the present time. In this and the remaining sections of this chapter, reasons are given for holding that the Bible meets these needs as no other revelation does.

We should notice that the Bible is a collection of writings and not a single writing. The time of composition of the biblical writings commences probably about a thousand years before Christ, and ends about the year 100 A.D. They were written primarily for the age and the people of their own time, by men (or women) moved by the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament gives the choicest surviving literature of the nation which up to the time of Christ possessed the highest type of religion known to men, and shows the progressive development of thought and life within this nation. The New Testament is all concerned with the life of Jesus and his apostles and the growth and literature of the church founded by the apostles in the first century. The Old Testament was the sacred literature known and revered by Jesus and all the writers of the New Testament, and it thus forms a background for, and explanation of, the latter to a large extent. With these elements of unity there is great variety in the language, content, and purpose of these writings.

When the Bible is compared with the Koran, the writings of Confucius, the sacred writings of India, or any other known collection of religious writings, it will without question rank far above them all for the unprejudiced thinker. Many of the truths contained in the Bible are also taught in some of these other writings. And some parts of the Bible, such as chapters of names or ceremonial laws, have little or no religious value to the world today. It still remains true that the Bible, in view of its nature, history, the regard in which it is held, and the extent to which it is known, is by far the most valuable religious literature which the world possesses. Attention is called to special elements of value in succeeding sections.

15. The need is felt for a revelation of God more authoritative than the opinions of ordinary men. The Bible is an extraordinary revelation of religious truth, tested by many generations of the best men and found to show the working of God's Spirit upon its authors.—The realization of the fallibility of ordinary men, and of the fact that religious truth cannot be directly discovered through the senses, explains the desire which men have had for a "supernatural revelation." In the past it has generally been in peculiar visions or dreams or unusual experiences, often of a startling or terrible nature, that men have thought to receive revelations from God. We are coming to realize

now that, although God reveals himself in all experiences of life, his greatest and most important revelations are to be known, not by some unusual manner in which they were first received, but by the nature of the revelation itself, the evidence of its truth which comes from its results in yielding the fullest and noblest life.

We do not know the detailed history of the formation of the "canon" (the standard list of books regarded as especially inspired) of the Old Testament or the New, but we know that these books were sifted out from among a much larger number, because they seemed to be of especial religious value in one way or another. Some of the books were selected because they gave the history, actual or traditional, from the creation down to the period a few centuries before Christ, with the older accounts purified by the high moral and religious spirit of later ages and of the writers, and with the religious interpretation of the actual history in the light of faith in Jehovah. Some of the books were the recorded words of the prophets which had stirred their generation and succeeding ones most powerfully to the reformation of religion and life. Some contained the songs used in temple and synagogue and doubtless also in the home, to express need for, and faith in, God. Some gave the wise sayings of the sages of various times, as they had been collected. Of the nature of the

New Testament books we have already spoken. They were gradually formed into a special collection to be read in the churches, and finally, after some centuries, given a place beside the Old Testament as especially inspired and sacred.

All this process of sifting and selection, carried on both by the mass and by the leaders of the people, brought together a collection of books of very extraordinary value, recognized as setting forth the highest conceptions of God and man. The evidence that the authors of the books of the Bible were moved by the Spirit is the same as the evidence that men today are moved by the Spirit, namely, that their words, and, so far as we know them, their lives showed the influence of the Spirit of righteousness, purity, and love working through them, and inspiring in them the highest faith in God and zeal for the welfare of man.

It is helpful to remember that religious revelation proceeds by the same method as revelation of other forms of truth. In science for the most part a theory is proposed by someone with a kind of intuitive perception of probable truth, and then tested by experiment and confirmed or dismissed. So in religious revelation. Many have thought God had revealed truth to them, and have declared it in his name, but the test of application to life has shown it to be partially or wholly false. It is the wonderful tests of the millenniums of practice

which guarantee to us the divine authority of the Bible, and we must keep on testing in order to discover what has present value for us.

16. Belief in a good God implies belief that he would reveal his nature and will to men, in a way characteristic of his nature. The Bible bears the marks of giving a revelation from God as well as of God.—If God be loving, he would want to reveal himself to men. If he be just, he could not require men to obey him unless he had made plain to them what his will was. As we recognize the word of a friend by peculiarities in his voice, or the letter from a friend by his handwriting and signature, so we should expect that a revelation from God would bear marks peculiar to his nature. In former ages when the primary characteristic of God was thought to be power, evidences of his manifestation of himself were found in unusual exhibitions of power. But as we have come to believe that the peculiar characteristic of God is loving character, and recognize that power is not necessarily good, we come to find evidences of the self-revelation of God in that which expresses and inculcates loving character.

In view of the actual nature of man, and our faith about God, we should expect him to be revealing himself to men progressively, in ever-increasing measure; that those whose faith was approaching the truth would feel especially con-

fident that he was revealing himself to and through them. Such experiences we find recorded in the Bible. The men who had the loftiest faith in God and the clearest perception of the need for faith in and love for him and for one another spoke with the consciousness of divine authority—"Thus saith the Lord"—and the conscience of man responded to the message thus spoken in God's name, thus indicating that God's Spirit was active both in the prophet or apostle and in the hearer, who recognized God's voice in the message of righteousness or love. Every point of value in the Bible, all those qualities which have made it pre-eminent as a book of religious instruction and inspiration, tend to show that it is the result not only of the efforts of the best men to find God, but of God's revelation of himself to man.

17. A divine revelation is needed through which the plain and ignorant man can learn of God, without the interference of priests or religious leaders who might come between him and God. The Bible meets this need in a remarkable way.—The extreme of the caste system of India, with its great evils, is due to the fact that the highest caste, the Brahmans, are supposed to be the only people who understand the truth about the gods and religion so that they can properly conduct sacrifice or other religious ceremonies. The Roman Catholic church has generally held that the common

people were incapable of understanding the Bible rightly and that they should look to the priests for all their knowledge of God and religion. Therefore, except when in strong competition with Protestantism, it has generally forbidden the use of the Bible to the common people, and in every way discouraged independent thought about religion. The Protestant churches have generally appealed directly to the Bible as the revelation of the truth about God, and put it into the hands of everyone to study for himself. As a result, education in general, and mental and moral progress in communities dominated by Protestant principles have been greatly superior to what is to be found where the Roman church has been in sole possession of the ground. This may be seen by comparing conditions in Spain, Italy, Mexico, Central and South America, where Roman Catholicism has held almost exclusive sway, with conditions in the other parts of Christendom, where Protestantism has been strong. Unfortunately, Protestant churches have in the past been inconsistent in the application of this principle of the guidance of the individual by the Spirit of God, and have attempted to enforce certain interpretations of the Bible and views of the truth about God upon their own members and others. The result has been the arising of innumerable sects of Protestants, competing and to some extent warring with each

other. The recognition of the right and duty of every man to study the Bible for himself, and believe and live according to the highest truth he finds revealed there and in the other experiences of his life, is making it possible now for large bodies of Christians which have been separate to co-operate and even to unite in fellowship and work for God and man. The Bible is wonderfully suited to be such a guidebook to the unlearned man, and release him from bondage to ecclesiastical authority.

At the same time there is much truth in the position that the unlearned man cannot alone properly interpret the Bible. There is much difference in this regard in different parts of the Bible, and many cannot be properly understood and used without the guidance of those who after careful preparation can give the true meaning or explain the right use. And in general we must recognize that it is foolish for any man to disregard the knowledge and wisdom which have been acquired by the great labors of the greatest minds and truest hearts of the past; and so that there must be much authority in the interpretations and statements of belief which the church has received from past ages. Only these things must be presented to the individual for God's Spirit to use in making plain to him the truth, instead of being thrust upon him as something which he must accept without question.

18. Man requires religious truth, not in the form of logical treatises, but in forms which stir the noblest and strongest feelings. The Bible presents religious truth in such forms.—Deep, clear, and logical thinking is not easy nor common among men, and although such thinking and writings embodying it in suitable form for the student are very necessary for the attainment of the truth and preparation to teach it, they alone will not reach and move a man. The same principles may, however, be grasped and applied by him, if they are presented in song and story, parable and picture. This is done incomparably in the Bible. Its descriptions of the beginnings of order and life in the world are simple and grand—not in scientific language but in the forms of the traditions and legends of remote ages modified and purified by faith in the one righteous and loving God. The primal needs and passions of life, with the religious and moral principles which underlie them, meet us in the stories of the patriarchs and the early legends and history of Israel. The Psalms give us songs and prayers of devotion that appeal to all ranks and classes of men, and the books of the prophets in many cases deal with social and religious problems in a direct and popular way which makes them useful and applicable to the present day as well as to the day in which they were first given. So in the New Testament the

simple narratives of the life of Jesus and his parables, the pictures of the glories of the future life in the Book of Revelation and other parts of the New Testament have stirred the highest enthusiasm and brought faith, wisdom, and comfort to all the generations which have known them.

19. That people of all classes and conditions may be united in the worship of one God and co-operation in doing his will, a revelation is needed with great variety in its appeal to men of all classes and conditions. The sweep and variety of the appeals made to all classes, in the Bible, are unparalleled by any other collection of religious writings.—Almost all the religions of mankind have been local in their character. They have been so closely related to the places and people where they grew up that, while they powerfully influenced the men of that vicinity, they were of very much less interest or value to people farther away. Sacred cities and places, such as Mecca or Jerusalem, may be of positive value for people living near enough to visit them, but may much lessen the value of a religion for people farther distant. The Koran appealed very strongly to the people of Arabia and at the time of Mahomet, but distance in time from its author and in place from the sacred city of Mecca seriously decreases its interest and power.

The great variety of physical and geographical conditions existing in the little land of Palestine, in which most of the Bible was written, including lake and river, mountain and plain, desert and fertile country, temperate and torrid climate, and the long sea coast, with animals, vegetables, and minerals belonging to these various conditions, gives to its literature a wealth of allusion which appeals to people of almost all human conditions. The fact that the biblical Scriptures were written at different times during a period of about eleven hundred years, which witnessed great historic events and changes and brought its people into contact with the great empires of the earth, adds greatly to the breadth of its appeal. References in the New Testament to conditions, good and bad, in various parts of the Roman Empire, which have their parallels in all parts of the world, have helped to make the Bible a book for all men. People in both Orient and Occident have found the character of Jesus appealing to their highest ideals. Thus has the Bible been peculiarly and providentially fitted to reveal God to men of all nations.

20. A revelation is required by man, and found in the Bible, which shows men how at the same time, consistently with each other, to come into harmony with God and to gain or preserve those things which are necessary or valuable for the

interests of the various phases of the physical and spiritual life of man.—In the simpler and more primitive forms of religion, the religious ceremonies and actions were mostly related to the physical needs of the people for rain, good harvests, safety from enemies, success in war, health, children, etc. These needs are permanent ones and a God whose power extends to all the affairs of life must have something to do with supplying these needs. Different forms of religion have recognized the various needs of men in unequal degree. Mohammedanism emphasizes the sensuous needs and sensual desires of men. Buddhism aims to abolish all desire whatever. Christian Science is mainly concerned with physical health. Asceticism exalts spiritual development at the expense of the body. But the Bible recognizes the needs of both body and soul as legitimate and not antagonistic. The need and value of the common comforts for the body, the institutions for social welfare, the family, school, church, and state, that which appeals to the sense of the beautiful in scenery, music, form, and literature, and finally and fundamentally those moral principles which make society happy and healthful and character noble and heroic, are all recognized in the Bible as in no other religious literature. It thus serves as a healthy corrective to extremes of all sorts which would tend to make life narrow or one-sided, at the same time that it

is uncompromising in its condemnation of the slightest evil in the spiritual life. Written in periods when society was much farther from the ideal state than it is now, it served to point the way and establish the principles which have led, and must lead, to a constant progress toward social perfection.

21. If the greatest force in and behind the universe be a God whom it would be right to worship and obey and natural to love, then we shall be able to recognize in any revelation of the best religion a revelation of and from God. The pre-eminence of the Bible as a revelation of God arises from the fact that the reason and conscience of any man may find in it the highest conceptions of God and man and he may thus receive the revelation of God for himself.—If God had not given to man the power to recognize his truth and to receive his revelation, then all claims made for the Bible as a revelation of God would be idle and impossible to substantiate, and there would be no such thing as divine revelation. And if the real God be one who is not perfectly righteous and loving, whose worship and service would be something less than the best religion, then man has no right to worship and obey him. It is only on the supposition that the highest teaching of Christianity is true, namely, that God embodies in his character our highest ideals of love, justice, purity, and power, that we

can be justified in loving and obeying him, and can be sure of knowing his will. This principle must imply that God reveals himself constantly in all of our experience, and not through the Bible alone, that every truth which brings us to a higher idea of God and understanding of our duty to men is a revelation of God. It also gives us the fundamental principle for the right use of the Bible, which is the subject of the next chapter.

In science and all other activities of thought, we assume that the universe is rational. If there be a God at all whom our reason can in any degree apprehend, it must be that his revelation of himself will be, like the knowledge of his universe, according to reason, and not contrary to it.

There is no hope of the reuniting of the various Christian sects or of agreement as to the nature and will of God, so long as each holds as infallible truth his own interpretation of writings of the distant past through which God revealed himself to men of earlier generations. This has been one of the very serious errors of Christian people as well as of adherents of Mohammedanism and other forms of religion. "Conservatism" stands for the preservation of that which has come down from the past. Its general attitude is right. It often errs, however, in failure to distinguish between that which is of permanent value in that which has been received, and that which was

temporary in form or value. True Christianity insists on the necessity for the constant revelation of truth to each man by the Holy Spirit, by which he shall be able to recognize in the Bible and the teaching of the church and that of science or any other department of thought or experience, what he needs in order to come to God himself, and do his will in the world of the present.

CHAPTER III

HOW TO USE THE BIBLE

"If any man willeth to do his will he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself."—John 7:17.

22. To use the Bible as a source for non-religious truth, one should understand the human elements in its origin.—The principal non-religious uses which men have made or desired to make of the Bible may be classified as scientific and historical. It has been thought that whatever the Bible said about the order and process of creation, and the laws of the physical universe, animate and inanimate, must be absolutely accurate and true. It has also been held that all narratives of events must be held to be accurate and inerrant history. Both of these views leave out of consideration the conditions and circumstances of the composition of the books.

The views of the origin and laws of the physical universe which are found in the Bible are the views which were current at the time those writings were composed and we have no reason to think that they were based on careful scientific investigation. Nor have we any sufficient reason to think that they were supernaturally revealed.

There is no such claim made for them by their authors. On the other hand, it is clear that these writings were composed first of all for the people of the time in which they lived, written in the language and reflecting the highest ideas of the time. For instance, when the early chapters of Genesis were composed, it would have been impossible for a writer to have explained the processes of development of order, beauty, and life in the universe as scientists do today. The principles of such science were unknown, and if someone had understood and tried to explain them, he would not have had words in which to do so, and would have been certain to have created false impressions instead of true. Bible statements concerning topics now within the realm of science, then, must be considered as giving the views of their times, and as containing just such truth as had been reached by the processes of thought and observation which had been developed up to that time.

The narratives of the Bible represent what their authors believed to be the facts of history at the time of writing. A large part of the narratives of the Old Testament was put into the form which we have, many centuries after the events which they describe. For some of them the original documents from which they were gathered are specifically referred to, and the writings are evidently arrangements by "editors" of material

both oral and written which was available for them. The original documents were doubtless written in some cases by contemporary witnesses of the events described, and in other cases were just the writing-out of oral tradition which had been handed down for generations. In all these cases it would be inevitable that errors of memory and unscientific views of events would color the narratives and prevent them from being fully accurate. It is further clear that the methods of the editors in using the material which they had was not scientific, but that they pieced together more or less conflicting narratives of different persons, and included comments or explanations of their own or of others which would not be of full historical value. The Bible was written in the Orient, primarily for orientals, and we find in the Orient little or no conception of history in our exact western sense, and must not expect it in the Bible. Marvelous tales very quickly grow up about heroes of past ages, and are readily accepted as true by unscientific minds and passed on by them to later generations. No doubt these processes took place in connection with biblical narratives. The historical value of biblical narratives is therefore unequal, and depends in each case upon the evidence which may be found from the consistency and verisimilitude of the narrative itself, and its agreement with other biblical and

"profane" narratives, monuments, or other sources of history.

It is well to note here that for most people of today the question of the accuracy and truth of the historical narratives and "scientific" teachings of the Old Testament is of very little importance. It is the religious and ethical teachings which are of value, and their value is quite independent of their truth as history or science. And this is the principal significance of these writings as biblical Scriptures. It is of no religious value for us to know the *order* or *method* of creation. It is of great value for us to believe that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe. It is of little importance whether a Hebrew of the name Jacob ever lived and acted according to the Genesis narrative. It is of great importance for us to find barren places turning into Bethels, and supplanters into princes of God, both in history and in our own experience. We have seen that our thoughts about God must be faith and cannot be knowledge in the literal sense, and the teachings of the Bible cannot change that fact for us. So that if the story of Jacob's life is all literal and accurate history, so far as it describes events within the realm of sense and knowledge, that does not prove that there ever was such a God as Jehovah. Nor, if we should come to think of Jacob as an entirely mythical character, would

that affect the truths of faith which are taught us in the narrative of his life.

The question of the historicity of the New Testament narratives is of more vital importance to Christian faith, although it does not depend absolutely upon their accuracy in any way. But whatever their value, they must be treated on the same principle as those of the Old Testament, and any other historical documents. To bring strong evidence of their general historical value is comparatively easy. To prove that they are correct in every detail is absolutely impossible. Even here the religious value is of far more importance than the historical, nor can it depend upon it. God has revealed his love and righteousness and the truths of his spiritual kingdom to us in the Gospels, whether they are accurate history or not.

"Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," unto science the things that are science's, unto history the things that belong to history, "and unto God the things that are God's."

23. To use the Bible as a guide to right conduct, one must seek the light which it throws on the results of different kinds of action and the relative worth of different motives; that is, the assistance which it renders to reason and conscience.—However literally a man thinks of the Bible as the rule of conduct today, no one undertakes to obey all of the commands which it contains, which were

given at one time or another as rules of conduct. Different sects have picked out certain commandments which they feel required to obey as literally as they can, such as that concerning baptism or the keeping of the seventh day holy. But all are agreed that we cannot be expected to obey all the commandments in the Bible—that God does not want us to do so today. And the only consistent principle for the acceptance of some and rejection of others is that which is stated in the thesis of this section. No commandment is a command of God to a given man, until it appeals to the conscience of that man—until he has some reason for thinking that it will be helpful to himself or to other men and pleasing to God for him to do the thing enjoined. It is not as a code of laws, but as a source of light upon human life and its problems, that the Bible has its marvelous value as a guide to the highest life. A good man does not regard it as wrong to covet his neighbor's property because the Bible prohibits it, but because when he reads in the Bible, "Thou shalt not covet," his conscience approves that command as a right one. When he reads the rules for the test of the purity and faith of a wife by the drinking of the holy water containing the dust from the tabernacle floor (Num. 5:11 ff.), he does not regard the rules as suitable to the life of the present day. They are not God's command to this generation.

In section 15 attention was called to the peculiar value of the Bible due to the process of the selection of the books of which it is composed. The testing of the Bible as a guide to life by its use in the church and among its members since the formation of the canon of the Scriptures has increased this value. Not the indiscriminate but the discriminating use of the Bible as a light on the path of life by Christians for many centuries has showed by its results that the light is very great—so great that it is foolish and wrong for one to try to go right without it when he might have its aid. In this sense of a tested and proved light upon the problems of life, the Bible is the highest written authority for conduct which is known in the world. But it must ever be remembered that it is because God uses it to make the path of duty plain to the reason and moral judgment, and not as a system of laws which may be accepted without regard to the reason or conscience, that it has this value.

24. To use the Bible as a guide to the true faith, one must seek in it the highest interpretations of experience, that is, those in harmony with and promotive of the best life, individual and social.—In chapter i it was shown that it was both natural and obligatory for a man to adopt the best religion, with the best faith which he could find, and it was also pointed out how the best faith should be tested and recognized. Before a man has any

right to accept the Bible or any other book as teaching the true faith, he must have evidence that it teaches *him* the best faith which he has thus far been able to find. This can be known for him only by the examination of its teachings in the light of the general principles which determine the best faith—reasonableness, value for individual life, and value for social life or tendency to make men righteous.

As a man tests the Bible in this way he finds many passages and parts which meet these tests, as well as some which do not. That is, he finds the truth revealed more clearly and perfectly in the life and teachings of Jesus than in the stories of the Book of Judges, for example. There should not be the slightest hesitation which standards to accept for his faith. Reason and conscience instinctively select the highest which they find, and this process should become a conscious and definite one. Let the student get light from every part of the Bible which offers him light, but let him not try to believe any teaching about God or his relations to men just because it is in the Bible, nor try to harmonize all the teachings of the Bible perfectly. Such exercise will be found to be vain and confusing rather than enlightening. As a matter of fact, there are different and to some extent conflicting ideals of faith and conduct set forth in the Bible—we may well say that the lower

ideals are the more undeveloped, and that they contain truth which is made clearer in the later and higher forms—but we shall do best to take it for ourselves in the highest forms in which we can understand it.

While the time-honored custom of reading the Bible through in course a chapter a day, from Genesis to Revelation, has its value, it does not logically supply the daily need for faith and courage. Under proper guidance it is well to become thoroughly acquainted with all parts of the Bible. But for the planting and cultivating of faith and guidance of conduct, those books and chapters should be used which are most useful for these purposes. The New Testament should come before the Old, and the gospels before the epistles. Many of the psalms and chapters in Isaiah are of the greatest value for devotion and inspiration, and the proverbs, for practical wisdom. The Bible is a library and should be used like other libraries, those books being read first and most frequently which are of most value for the needs of the reader.

In the realm of faith the Bible is authoritative in the same way in which it was found to be authoritative as a guide to right conduct. The church has found its highest faith taught in the Bible, has found its life made strong and glorious by accepting the biblical ideal of God, as revealed

especially in Christ, as real, and by viewing the daily experiences of life, joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, in the light of this interpretation of the final explanation of all these things, the heavenly Father. This long experience of the church forms a powerful argument for the truth and value of the highest faith illustrated and affirmed in the Bible, and thus gives to it its peculiar authority as a guide to faith.

The great creeds of the church have a corresponding authority—not as finally determinative of the forms of faith but as pointing out to the reason and conscience the great interpretations of life and history which through long ages have been found to lead to righteousness and hope. However our belief may differ from that expressed in these creeds, it must express the great truths which they contain, or fail of being the best faith.

25. To use the Bible as a progressive book, one must apply to the conditions of today the permanent principles which he finds to have determined the highest forms and interpretations of life in the changing and advancing intellectual and social conditions described in the Bible.—The conditions of human life have been rapidly and remarkably changing during the last century, and they are still changing rapidly. The growth of cities, the division and specialization of labor, and the large and increasing use of machinery and ever-new

inventions for the convenience and welfare of men are some of the features of these changes. Political and social forms have been changing with industrial, and finally the literature and thought of today is very different from that of a century ago, and has come to no stable or permanent condition. While language does not seem to change much, the meaning which is received from its words, the thoughts which they suggest are inevitably changing with these changes in the forms of the life to describe which it is used. All these changes are so marked that many are inclined to think that the religion which has been good in the past is out of date, and like the simple machinery of a century ago must be thrown to the rubbish heap. It is probably true that religion has not changed its forms to adapt them to the changing needs of humanity, as readily and quickly as the other factors in human life, and still it has been changing too, here more and there less, but everywhere to some extent.

A careful study of the Bible will show that the life described there and the religious views which were related to it also changed from time to time. In the early history of Israel, its God, Jehovah, was still regarded as one among many gods—doubtless the greatest and best, and the only one whom the Israelites ought to worship, but still he was only the god of their tribe, and other nations

had other gods. But as civilization progressed and thought developed, the belief that there was but one God for the whole world gradually took ever-deeper root in the minds, first of the prophets, and then of the priests and common people, and after the exile, monotheism was firmly established as the Jewish faith. But even in the time of Christ we find that there were serious defects in the Jewish religion, from which the disciples themselves were not free, and which have left their marks on the writings of the New Testament as well as the Old.

The main characteristics of human nature remain the same, while its surroundings vary in a thousand ways. The principal needs of men remain the same, while the ways in which they are supplied are constantly changing. And thus the fundamental principles of religion are constant, while their application may and should be ever advancing. These principles we have considered in the first two chapters, and they have been found in Christianity from its beginning, and may be traced still farther back into the earliest period of Old Testament times. As we find these principles applied first rudely and to the simple forms of patriarchal life, and then ever more intelligently to the increasingly complex forms of tribal and national life, we may learn the need and possibility of their reinterpretation and application to all the needs and problems of today, and thus have

our religion progressive and suited to the needs of today, in its forms, without losing any of the value which it has gained from its millenniums of development, just as the most modern and complicated machinery embodies the simple mechanical principles of earlier ages and the improvements and inventions which have been gradually added from time to time.

Let us remember, too, that no actual form of organized religion has ever yet met the needs of humanity perfectly. We may say, if we will, that Christianity has never yet been properly tried. But if that is true it means an ideal Christianity, for there have been forms of creed and of organization under the name of Christianity and doubtless with *something* of its spirit and reality which have been tried by large numbers of people. If the faith has never yet been fully applied to life, it may be that the fault was partly in the way the faith was stated and taught, and not entirely in the lack of earnestness and sincerity in those who professed to hold it. If the organization did not establish the kingdom of God in any complete and satisfactory form, it may be partly because it was never completely adapted to the nature and needs of society, and not merely because its efforts were opposed in various ways. So we cannot say with confidence that the highest form of religion prevailing among

men at any time in the past was the best form even for that generation and community, much less that it is perfectly suited to our time. Our effort should not be, therefore, to retain the form of organization or of doctrine which belonged to the church established by the apostles, but to find the principles of truth and value in those earliest forms and in the development of those forms since then, and apply those principles to present needs and conditions so as to get the best possible religion for humanity today.

26. To use the Bible as a Christian book one must seek (1) from the effects which the life and words of Jesus had upon his disciples and the early church, as indicated by the writings of the New Testament, to understand as clearly as possible the character of the cause, in the Spirit of God which determined his life; and then (2) to find in the Old Testament writings the evidences of the work of the same Spirit and the preparation for the revelation in Jesus; and finally (3) to develop the faith, conduct, and institutions of today in harmony with the truth revealed in Jesus and thus establish the kingdom of God in all the world.—Jesus is the center of interest in the Bible. In the light of this interest the Bible acquires a unity which does not belong to it otherwise. The New Testament is concerned with his life and its results in the early church. The Old Testament forms the back-

ground of the New and shows how preparation was made for the work of Jesus.

The facts of the life of Jesus have a great and special religious significance for the Christian, to which attention is called later (see sections 57–61). Many people think that if we cannot be quite certain of the accuracy of the gospel stories the whole Christian faith is in danger. While there is the best reason to believe that the Gospels give us good history, and that their value as history cannot be destroyed by any legitimate criticism, it is of importance to look deeper into their meaning, and see that even if this were not true, Christian faith as a whole would not be endangered. For Christian faith is concerned fundamentally with God and his relations with men. These are matters of faith and not of knowledge (see section 9) and can neither depend upon historical facts for their evidence, nor be disproved by the invalidation of supposed history.

Christian faith has held that in Jesus it found God manifest in the flesh. The evidence for this was never solely the confirmation of miracles but the recognition of the ideal character, the spirit which most completely met the needs of men, in the life of Jesus. The fundamental question, then, with regard to the New Testament as a religious and Christian book is: What are the main features of this ideal character and what was the result of

the acceptance of this ideal as the highest type of man and the most perfect possible revelation of God to man, upon the earliest Christians?

The central and essential question in any form of religion must be as to the nature and character of God or the ultimate reality which governs man's destiny. Our method, as already explained and more fully developed in later chapters, is to find what conception of God best corresponds to the facts of our experience and to our needs, individual and social. If God really is such a being as our highest thought believes him to be, then he would confer the greatest possible blessing upon men by revealing himself to them—giving to them in some way the thought of the ideal character which most fully represented him.

We have, then, the Gospels with their story of the life of Jesus, and the other books of the New Testament describing the effects of that life upon the people of the first century. And we know something of the effect which the faith set forth in the New Testament has had upon society as expressed in the church and the civilization which it has influenced from that day to this. We conclude that all that is good in these effects came from *truth* in the faith which lay behind them as cause. We are concerned, then, as noted in the last section, not with the exact forms of either the faith or the organization of the apostolic church,

but with that *in* them which gave them their *power*. The truth had to be put into the language and thought-forms of that day. The same truth must be put into somewhat different language and thought-forms if we are to understand it today. In our use of the Bible, then, we can never be relieved of the necessity for seeking for the truth, and proving it by the tests by which truth is known.

Many have thought the chief value of the Old Testament in relation to the life of Christ was in the foretellings of characteristics or details in his life, by the fulfilling of which he is known to be the Messiah whom God promised, and finally sent. The Gospel of Matthew refers to passages of the Old Testament with this purpose in view. The Old Testament has two truer and much more important relations to Christ. In the first place, it was for him and his disciples and the people among whom he lived what the Bible has been to the church since it was completed. We can understand his teachings, then, only in their relation to this fact of the position of the Old Testament in the knowledge and faith of himself and the Jews of that time. And his use of the Scriptures is very suggestive for us (see section 7).

But another and more important way in which the Old Testament is a Christian book is that the revelation most fully made in Jesus is foreshadowed in it. As noted in the last section, there is to be

found in the Old Testament a gradually advancing conception of God, becoming ever more spiritual, pure, loving, and righteous. In the Book of Isaiah (who was therefore called the messianic prophet), and in other books less clearly and frequently, we find expressed many of the ideals, hopes, and expectations fulfilled in the life of Jesus. From the beginning there is the thought of God as having the character and likeness of the best man, and in the patriarchal stories of God appearing to men, he is thought of as appearing in human form. Gradually the cruder anthropomorphism disappears, and God becomes a spiritual being whom the heavens cannot contain, but ever one with whom men may have communion and fellowship; and the thought that he is morally righteous takes the place of the idea of ceremonial holiness, and the belief that he is Creator of the universe and Father of all men is reached by the most spiritual minds, although the latter idea, so wonderfully exemplified in Jesus, never obtained a strong hold in the mind of the ordinary Jew before his coming. Thus Jesus could appeal to the Scriptures as being fulfilled in his life and words, as he taught and lived their noblest precepts and truths.

It is becoming ever more clear that the life of Jesus, and the Bible in which that life is described, are of value to men in the degree in which they

help men to live similar lives, that is, lives governed by the same motives and determined by the same principles. The words at the head of this chapter draw attention to the fundamental rule or method of interpreting and using the Bible: "If any man willeth to do his will he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak of myself." The determination to do the will of God, to live the life completely dominated by love to God and men, is the great condition of making the highest use of the Bible and finding out the best faith. For the man who is guided by these motives looks for, and seizes upon, everything which will strengthen them in him and aid him in their expression; and thus he is guided to the deeper truths beneath the outward forms, and to the higher standards of action rather than the lower. The meaning and use of the Bible will become ever clearer and at the same time more wonderful to him whose life is devoted to the establishment of the kingdom of God in the hearts of all men.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT SHALL WE BELIEVE ABOUT GOD?

"Have faith in God."—Mark 11:22.

27. We ought to believe that there is but one God, that is, that there is one force in the universe which is more powerful than any other or all others together, so that it can control the universe absolutely.—The name for this belief is monotheism. It stands opposed to polytheism which denotes belief in many gods, but is commonly used to denote belief in more than one god, however few the number may be. It is in reality a form of polytheism when Christians hold an exaggerated or perverted form of trinitarianism, a belief in three gods who are in some way both three and one. This belief is also called tritheism. We discuss later a form of belief in the "Trinity" which is monotheistic. Tritheism is the faith that there are three individual, divine beings, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, differing in certain respects from each other and so distinct that we may pray to one without praying to all, or love one more than another, however we may think of them as being one or united. But all forms of polytheism tend to have a bad effect upon character. This may be seen by contrasting them with a true

monotheism. If I believe that there is one righteous being who controls the universe superior to all other powers, then I must believe that if I strive to do right I will have the approval and help of this one God and that nothing can prevent him from accomplishing his will.

Tritheism has sometimes taught that Christ is God but at the same time different in character from God the Father. Many people think that Christ may be appealed to through the Virgin Mary because she was his earthly mother; and that God may be reached and persuaded to think kindly and deal gently with men through Christ because he is the Son of God, or because he won the Father's favor or appeased his wrath by his death on the cross. Both of these ideas picture God as less loving or less indulgent than Christ or the Virgin. But if he be less loving he is less great, for a perfectly loving God is greater than one less loving. And if God can in any way be moved to deal kindly with men other than by his own character or by the actions of men striving to do his will, then he is not perfectly righteous, and encouragement is given to believe that God's favor may be won in some other way than by a trustful heart and a righteous life. Thus the tritheistic belief always involves a lower conception of God than the true Christian belief, and it does not so strongly favor a righteous life, but often tends to an un-

righteous one. The evils here illustrated belong to all forms of polytheism.

In our chapter about Jesus we shall find good reason to believe that God revealed himself through him, but we must be very careful if we say that Christ was God, not by that to mean that he was a different God from the Father, for in such a doctrine lie the same evil germs that manifest themselves in the most degraded polytheism. In some cases they may do little or no harm, but in others they will develop and do great harm as they have done.

Mormonism is the most base and degrading form of polytheism which claims to be Christian and found its teachings on the Bible. It furnishes us, too, one of the strongest arguments which could be desired of the great evils which may arise from the unquestioning and literal use of the Bible as an infallible authority; for if it be so accepted, a large part of Mormon teaching can be justified as biblical, whereas if Mormonism be tested and the Bible be used according to the principles we have explained, it is seen to be a very bad religion and to be utterly condemned by the Bible.

28. We ought to believe that God is personal, that is, that he thinks, feels, and wills in a way somewhat similar to human thinking, feeling, and willing, although without human limitations.—There is in human life a physical or material part

of man's being which has very vital relations to the spiritual parts denoted by the words thinking, feeling, and willing. But the importance of the physical part depends entirely on the spiritual part —a body that could not think, feel, or will might as well be dead. It is the spiritual part that is righteous or wicked, the spiritual part that enters into relation with other human beings as well as with God. It is this capacity to think, feel, and will that we mean by the word spirit. Now spirits can only love or obey or worship other spirits. We cannot in the fullest sense love or worship or obey God unless he is a spirit—unless he can love us in return, think about us, command us, and notice and be pleased with our obedience. Thus to say that God is a "principle," that God is law or order or mere force, is to say that God is not a being that we can worship, love, or obey, who does not hear or answer prayer, who cannot be called righteous, and who cannot be in any true sense known by a spiritual being. Of course we must not try to define this personality of God too closely—we shall only succeed in putting limitations upon our idea of God, and confusing ourselves. We know no spiritual beings except those dwelling in bodies. When they cease to dwell in bodies we cease to know them, and so we cannot imagine how spirits may think and feel and will and act, without bodies. But as we have good reason to believe

that spirits do live and act without such bodies as we have, we must not let our ignorance keep us from a most important faith.

29. It is contrary to the best faith to say that all that exists is part of God, that everything taken together makes up God.—This faith, that the whole universe is God, is called pantheism. There are many reasons why pantheism is not a good faith. In the first place, it is hardly possible to think of the whole universe as a spiritual being, righteous and loving, and yet made up of all the spiritual beings which exist, including all men, the most ignorant and wicked as well as the good. Then, such a belief tends to destroy the feeling of moral responsibility, and the distinction between right and wrong, for if God is all, then I am a part of God, and what I do, God is doing—he is all-powerful, so I cannot help doing what I do and am not responsible for it. And as it would be absurd to say that God does wrong, so what I do cannot be wrong, for it is just God's doing. There is then no such thing as sin, nothing to repent of, nothing to be forgiven for, no real distinction between man and God. To believe in such a God would also destroy the possibility of prayer, for instead of praying to a Father, we could only pray to the All, including ourselves and the rest of mankind, good and bad, wise and ignorant. It should be quite clear that such a belief will not help a man to

become righteous, at least not in any such way as belief in a personal, powerful, righteous God who gives to men responsibility, requires them to be righteous, punishes them for their sin, hears their prayer, and is ready to help them at all times. Christian Science is a form of pantheism, and much of the so-called "New Thought" of our day is strongly pantheistic in tendency.

30. We should believe that God is righteous and loving in character, like the character of Christ as pictured in the Gospels.—We are not here concerned with the historicity of the Gospels, but with the character of God. The rules of our faith require that we should attribute the highest character to God, that is, think of him as a being whose character and action promote the righteous life among men in the most complete way possible. Thus we must think of him as just, as desiring and requiring righteousness among men, and as being ready to help men in every way possible to become good. But most men who are familiar with the story of the life of Jesus as told in the Gospels agree that his character is the most ideal one which we have; that his spirit of love to all, especially the neediest, of forgiveness, and of demanding purity of heart and the absolutely unselfish life, consecrated to helping others, is the best spirit we can think of to help people to become righteous. Finding in the gospel picture the ideal character,

we therefore say that if God is the best imaginable being, his character must be like that attributed to Jesus. Another way of putting it is to say that we believe that if Jesus could be always accessible to everyone, as he was to the people he met in the few years of his ministry in Palestine, only in the spiritual way, and without the limitations under which he then worked, that is what we would want God to be. To believe that God is thus with us in the loving and righteous character pictured of Jesus is the most helpful faith which we can think of for us in our struggle for Christlike character for ourselves.

31. Belief in the Christlike character of God is the essential part of belief in "God the Son" or "the second person in the Trinity."—The Christian doctrine of the Son of God has always been connected with the faith that the life of Jesus was a peculiar revelation of the character of God the Father, or of the absolute God. In the great historical creeds, the theologians tried to maintain the truth of what they more or less clearly recognized to be a contradiction, but which they called a mystery, i.e., that Jesus was at the same time omnipotent and omniscient God, and man with all the limitations which belong to real humanity. There were various reasons for the great effort to maintain this contradiction, but the most important of them may be summed up in two:

(1) It is of the greatest value for men to believe that the God who created and still controls the world is a righteous, loving, forgiving, helping person who may be approached by anyone in need and never in vain, just as the man Jesus, as described in the Gospels, was righteous, loving, forgiving, helping, and accessible to even the lowest and most unworthy. (2) It is of very great value to men to believe that God himself has shown men the sort of life he would have them live, and which, with his help, it is *possible* for them to live, and that this life is the kind of life which, in the Gospels, Jesus is said to have lived. The first of these reasons shows why men have held to the "deity of Christ," and the second, why they have held to the "humanity of Christ." In considering the doctrine of the Trinity, we are mainly concerned with the first of these reasons. (The other will be considered in other connections.)

In our time students of history have raised doubts as to the historical truth of the description of the life of Jesus found in the Gospels, varying from questions as to the accuracy of the account of certain incidents, to the position that no person corresponding to the Jesus of the Gospels ever lived at all. While the latter position seems thoroughly absurd, and we believe that it is quite untenable, we must face the fact that it is honestly held by good and intelligent people and ask what

effect such a position would necessarily have on their faith. Here we need to remember that our faith about God is not knowledge, but faith; and that it cannot be demonstrated to be true, but is to be arrived at and maintained by the processes and tests which we have seen belong to "pure faith." The question, then, as to whether God is such a righteous and loving person as Jesus was said to have been, cannot be answered by proving or disproving the historicity of the gospel stories. Therefore, in so far as we are asking what to believe about God, we are not concerned directly with the facts about Jesus. The only important part of the faith in "God the Son" is therefore belief in the Christlike character of God, and this cannot be proved by the gospel history.

32. The meaning of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, or the "third person in the Trinity," is that God is not only the creator of the world but that he is present in all the world, and particularly in the hearts of men, to guide and bless.—Although we are not to confuse the Spirit of God with our own spirits, yet we believe that his spirit is constantly with ours, to prompt good and pure thoughts and give us strength to do whatever we should do. Different people receive greater or less measures of help from the Holy Spirit at different times, according to their special needs, and readiness to receive his help, but he is never absent from the world, nor

from the heart of any man unless he becomes absolutely and wholly bad. God's Spirit was in the world and in men's hearts before Christ came, as after, and in heathen lands as in Christian. We should think of God as helping us in every good thing that we think or do. The evidence of the presence of God (for the Holy Spirit is not a part of God, but God himself, present in his world) is not to be found mainly in supernatural manifestations, "speaking with tongues" or visions or anything of that sort, but in the power that makes men righteous and does whatever good is done in the world. We cannot be sure what was meant by the "speaking with tongues" reported when the power of the Holy Spirit was especially shown on the day of Pentecost—it seems then to have been some means by which men of different languages understood the gospel message, when one man was speaking in one language. But the "speaking with tongues" referred to in other parts of the New Testament was the making of sounds unintelligible until interpreted, and Paul speaks of the gift of tongues as one of little practical use. Whatever it was, it is not something to be sought by us except as a means for becoming, or helping others to become, righteous. We have abundant evidence of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the turning of men from sin to righteousness, and in their inspiration to good works of all

sorts, and this is the kind of work we should expect and desire God to do in the world, and therefore the best evidence of his activity.

33. Various arguments have been given to "prove" the existence of the Christian God, but none of them is conclusive.—One such argument is that we cannot help thinking of the greatest and best possible being as existing. But that is not true, for many people *do not* believe it. Another argument is that the world is a great piece of workmanship or effect, and that as every effect must have an adequate cause, we must hold to the existence of a great and intelligent God as cause of the universe. The evidence of the adaptation of one thing to another, and of the working of many things together to produce certain results, is held to prove that there is a great designer or a mind with great purposes behind the world, as it is impossible to believe that all that we see and know in the universe can be the result of the blind play of mechanical and chemical forces. We notice that the arguments mentioned, after the first one, depend for their value on the truth of the law "every event must have an adequate cause," which we believe to be completely true within the realm of knowledge; that is, with regard to things which are perceptible to the senses. If, however, we try to go, by means of this principle, outside of the world of sense, the first step, it is thought,

brings us to God, but the question immediately occurs, "What caused God?" and if the law of cause and effect is to be relied on, we cannot stop with God, but must go on forever from effect to cause, and will never get to a stopping-place. The arguments we have given help to make it reasonable to believe in God—we might say more reasonable than not to—but they still leave doubt, particularly as to the existence of the *Christian* God. That is, the argument is strong for the presence in the universe, as creating and controlling force, of a great mind or intelligence, but it is not at all so clear that that mind must have the character found in Christ, and that is the most important thing of all to believe.

34. The strongest reason for believing in the Christlike God is the value which that faith has for the development of righteous character and the largest life.—We believe that the history of nations and individuals will show that the lives which have come most completely under the influence of this faith have been the most helpful to the world and the most fully developed in character and experience. This can be seen on a large scale by comparing Christendom with non-Christian nations, and Protestant Christendom (where this faith has been more clear and central, more consistently held, and less confused by priestcraft and by unnecessary or even antagonistic elements) with

countries that are more exclusively Roman or Greek Catholic. It can also be seen in the study of the lives of great statesmen and great missionaries and in general in our everyday experience of the best and most reliable and lovable people we know.

It ought not to be difficult, however, for us to form a very valuable estimate of this faith apart from the effect which it has had in history. We have considered in previous sections the value of special elements in this faith and contrasted it with others. We cannot see how a better belief with regard to God can be proposed than that which finds its main elements in the Christian faith which we have sketched. If it can, we should accept it. If it cannot, we should accept that which has been outlined here. The two tests of the best faith, reasonableness and most beneficial effect on character, seem to be most fully satisfied in the conception of the Christlike God, and these tests are being constantly made in human experience. When we say "the Christian faith works well" or enables a man to get along best in the world, we are just saying that it meets these two tests. We hold to the reality of the power or force called gravity, because the calculations made and action performed on the assumption that it is real and that its laws are those discovered by Newton never lead to error or failure, and that fact justifies

our assumption of the truth of Newton's theory. Just so the universal success of the life guided by Christian faith is the strongest proof of its truth which we can have. The lives of most so-called Christians are determined only in a very limited degree by the Christian faith, and hence are very imperfect arguments for its truth; but most people will agree that even these imperfect lives are successful in the highest sense (not necessarily in business or money-making, but in the attainment of the most useful and best-developed life) in the measure that they are determined by the Christian faith.

35. By speaking of God as Creator, we mean that he has always been the cause and has had complete control of the development of the universe.—The position of modern science that matter is indestructible seems also to imply that it has never been created. We do not seem yet to have come to final conclusions as to the nature of matter, but it is certainly difficult for one educated in modern science to believe that there was ever a time when the primary atoms of matter did not exist. The reason why theologians have considered it important to believe that God created the world out of nothing (apart from the fact that that has been understood as the biblical teaching) is that if any different idea was held it seemed necessary to think that matter was something which was

opposed to God, and which God had gradually to conquer and bring under his control; that sin and corruption were necessarily connected with our material bodies because they were matter, and thus that matter formed a permanent force opposed to God's will. Some of the ancient philosophers held such doctrines, and they have largely affected the faith and practice of parts of the Christian church. However, it is not necessary to hold that God brought matter into existence, and that there was a time when it did not exist, in order to believe that it has always been completely under God's control. We may think of the chemical, mechanical, electrical, and any other forces operating in matter as being forms of the will or the power of God, and thus that God has eternally been immanent in, or in complete mastery over, matter. This view is consistent with the positions of modern science and still avoids the danger which theologians tried to avoid by the doctrine of creation out of nothing. This is also decidedly superior to that in another way, for the tendency in that theory was to say that God had made the world perfect at the time of creation, and started it going like a watch wound up, and that after that it continued to go by the laws he had established, but without needing any care or having any interference from him except on special occasions when he intervened with a miracle. But our belief in the continuous

process of creation holds that God is never absent from his world, but is in constant control and manipulation or development of it, and that thus the natural forces are working out his righteous and loving will.

36. Evolution, in so far as it is scientific and not a system of philosophy or faith, indicates something of the order and method of God's creation of the universe, but does not in any way dispense with belief in God as Creator.—Practically all scientists of today are agreed that the development of life as we know it on the earth has occupied great periods of time, probably many millions of years; that there has been progress from simpler to more complex forms of life through such long periods; and that the law of "the survival of the fittest in the struggle for existence" is one of the factors in this development. However, no scientist can prove that this development either could have taken place or did take place without the constant control of a great mind, that is, without the constantly directing and supporting power of God. When a scientist tells you that he can completely explain the universe without the theory of the activity of a mind in its development from the first, he is merely displaying his ignorance and foolishness—a *great* scientist would know better. But if he says that it is more *reasonable* to *believe* that the universe has attained to its present stage

of development without the activity of a creative mind than with it, then we should note that that is his *faith* or "philosophy" and not his knowledge, and that he cannot prove it, scientifically, and no scientist will ever be able to do so from the very nature of the case. Then we should further ask ourselves if his theory really is more reasonable, and if our thought is careful and deep we shall probably conclude that it is not; for the very word "evolution" means the "rolling out" or "unrolling" and implies that something has been rolled up. That is, it is just as absurd for the evolutionist to try to account for mind by the development of matter which has no mind in it as for a person to believe that a "magician" can get money out of a hat in which there is none. As a matter of fact, evolution has as yet no theory to account for the first appearance of animal or vegetable life in matter, nor for the first appearance of sensation or of self-consciousness such as we know in the human mind. Probably it will always be immensely easier to conceive of the development of the universe as we know it, under the direction and control of mind, than without such control. But when we come to apply our final test to these two contrary faiths (1) that no creative mind has been active in the development of the universe, and (2) that the universe is the work of a Christ-like God, we find that the latter is required to

satisfy our demand for the best faith—that which will have the best effect upon character. That has already been shown.

37. **We should believe in the Providence of God, that is, that he has such complete control of the universe that he is accomplishing his will in it.**—This faith is involved in that of God as Creator as explained in section 35, but is worthy of special emphasis. Older ideas of God as Creator were separable from that of God as preserving and guiding the development of the universe which he had made. We think rather of creation as a permanent process, involving the continuous care and control of God. If we consider the wonderful progress which has been made in the development of the universe from the chaotic forms of matter to the various forms of life, culminating (so far as we know) in human life where by far the most remarkable characteristics are mental and moral rather than physical, it is easy to believe that a personal being of the greatest intelligence and most perfect character has been in constant control of these forces of the universe and determined how they should develop. So we should believe that God is in such control at the present time, that he can bring to pass that which will be for the best interest, the highest good of his human children.

This belief should take a reasonable form, and not fail to consider that God himself is in some ways

limited. When we say that God is all-powerful, we must not understand that to mean that he can make black be white, nor make what has happened in history not to have happened, or any other absurd things. He is limited by his own nature and will, so that he cannot contradict himself, cannot do that which would be unrighteous or unloving, nor go contrary to that which he sees would be the best way to accomplish his purposes. We shall also see later that he is limited by the wills of human beings who are not in harmony with him or who disobey him. We cannot say that he is in perfect control of bad men, nor, indeed, of anyone who is not perfectly good. But we may believe that he, with all the resources of the universe and of his infinite mind, will find ways of helping and caring for those who are trying to do his will, that is, to become righteous; and that he will finally accomplish his will completely in the universe, although that may take a very long time.

38. We should believe that pain and all physical evil are intended by God for the good of humanity, especially for the discipline and development of character, and will accomplish this result in so far as men will permit them to do so.—The problem of evil is a great one and we can here consider only the fundamental principles of our belief about physical evil; that is, pain and suffering of the body, and every kind of deprivation or

loss except that which is moral—sin and sinful nature. The nature and cause of sin is considered in the next chapter and we cannot hold that God is at all responsible for it except that he made it possible for man to sin when he made man free, and that freedom is the one condition of the possibility of the development of moral character.

We can easily see that pain and evil are of great value in the education of the race and development of character, where they are evidently the consequence of sin, for they help to show sin in its true horrible colors, and to turn people away from it. The pain which I suffer on account of my own sin does very much to turn me from my sin. The pain which I suffer, or those whom I love suffer, on account of the sins of others, helps me to strive with all my might to make all men good, to get sin out of the world, to promote righteous character in society as a whole and in all its parts.

It is not so easy to see the value of suffering where its connection with sin is not direct and evident, but we should be able to recognize here also great advantages that come to individuals and to the race by its means. We all know how some of the highest virtues, sympathy, patience, courage, heroism, loyalty, and love, are often tested and developed by suffering as they could be in no other way which we can imagine. We can understand that faith in God is comparatively easy while

everything goes well, but that its true test as well as its greater value is shown when the pain comes and things seem to go wrong. The faith which will not stand the test of suffering even when no good seems to be in view is a very weak faith, and that which survives a severe test has acquired much strength by the test—strength which may be of the highest value in helping others to the same faith.

But there is also an education of society by means of pain. It is suffering or its possibility which has been one of the greatest spurs to discovery and invention, to progress in civilization, in every direction. Common perils and great calamities have perhaps done more than anything else to unite the people of one nation, and to bring together different nations in a common sympathy and works for the common good. The earthquake in one city or the famine in one land, which brings gifts and expressions of sympathy from all over the world, does more than can be calculated to promote the spirit of universal brotherhood which is the highest religious and social ideal.

No explanation of the immeasurable values which flow from the existence or the possibility of pain will be able to satisfy all who are in the deep experiences of sorrow; but all should realize that their faith in God involves their faith that "all things work together for good to them that love God," and should cling to this faith until the

particular uses of the pain shall have become clearer. And it is to be noted that that event which perhaps causes more and deeper pain than any other in human life—the death of a loved one—must lose a very large part of the terror which still clings to it, when our faith in a loving God becomes strong enough to make us really believe that the loved one is not dead, but only passed on to a larger and more beautiful life than the one he has left, where we shall later see and know him again. Thus the best faith, by its interpretation and use of pain and suffering, will actually make it a blessing to man and society, whereas without such a faith it would remain, as it seems to do for some people, and may actually do for those who refuse to turn to righteousness and the higher life, unmitigated evil. But in this case God cannot be blamed. He means it for good, and for him who chooses the evil way, even the greatest pleasures and greatest blessings which God can give must be really evil.

39. We should believe that God can and will do anything which is consistent with the character of a righteous, loving Father of mankind and Creator of the universe, and not think that the partial discoveries which men, especially scientists, have made, of some of his methods of working, preclude our belief that he may work in many other ways, of which we have as yet little or no knowledge.—The

question we have especially in mind here is that of "miracles." There are various wrong ideas of miracles which we should not hold. We cannot believe that God would or could do anything contrary to his own character. This we have indicated in the last paragraph. It is a part of the character of God that he should be consistent in his action, just as the best men we know are consistent. The better a man is, the surer we can be of what he would do under any given circumstances. So we should expect consistency and not arbitrariness or caprice in God's action. But men are constantly using the forces and material of nature to accomplish their will, and do what matter and force without their added intelligence and will would never accomplish. So we should not think of God as unable to use the forces of nature for his own purposes, but rather as ever using them in the fullest degree as a man would do if his power and intelligence were infinite instead of finite. A man in his works of invention and skill never interrupts or interferes with the laws of nature. He makes use of them to accomplish his purposes. We have a right, then, to think of God as accomplishing his will through natural laws (as well as spiritual laws), and not as having to suspend them in order to do what he chooses.

When we think of God as doing his will in a consistent, regular, uniform way, that is by no

means to exclude real answer to prayer—that is, the doing by God of things, in view of our prayer, different from what he would have done if we did not pray. Here again let us consider the action of the best men. There are good reasons why they should *always* (that is, regularly and uniformly) do things for other people (when the requests are right and lie within their power to accomplish) when they are asked to do them, which they would not do if they were not asked. The acceding to the request brings the parties into closer and more sympathetic relationship, and the things desired are appreciated much more if granted in answer to requests than if they were given without the requests. There is no reason why we should not think that God acts in the same way.

We may believe that God acts according to law, without holding that we know already all the laws according to which he acts. While the discoveries in science in the last century or two are marvelous, they are but as a drop in an ocean when compared with the universe of reality which remains unexplored. Because we do not yet know how God could accomplish something which is said to have been done in the past, or which we wish might be done in the future, is no good reason for saying that he has not done it or could not do it. The first question to ask is, Would the result desired probably be according to the wise and

loving will of God? If it would not, we should not expect God to do it. If it would, we should pray that he might do it, if the first principle of our prayer is the desire that his will, that is, that which is really best, should be done. Then we should take the result as manifesting his will in the circumstances.

40. The value of wonderful works or "miracles," in so far as they are thought of as coming from God, does not lie in the power that is shown, but in the character that is revealed.—No one can tell how much power may eventually come under the control of man, nor how great powers might belong to other spirits than God. Human beings could never possibly perceive any works so wonderful that they could rightly say, "No power but God's could do this"; for a finite being cannot perceive a work of infinite power and know it to be such, and any wonderful event which we could imagine would require only power enough to accomplish it, and no more. Men can do things today which a hundred years ago would have been considered miracles manifesting absolutely divine power. The inventions of science—steam engine, telephone, telegraph with and without wires, airships, electrical apparatus of all sorts—show one kind of modern miracles. The discoveries in the realm of disease and healing are perhaps even more wonderful. The prevention and the cure of former

great scourges of humanity, the healing of diseases regarded for thousands of years as incurable, even of leprosy, and the healing of certain forms of disease by carefully studied and applied mental treatment ("psychotherapy") are among the wonders of the present age, which only a short time ago would have been imagined only as manifestations of the power of God, absolutely beyond the control of men. It has probably already been accomplished in various cases that life has been reinstated by means, e.g., of electricity, where it had actually ceased, i.e., where the heart had ceased its beating and the lungs their breathing; and it is quite conceivable that this might be done frequently in the future, when decay has not proceeded too far. And it is to be noted that the accomplishment of these results does not depend on the holding of any particular religious faith. The nerve specialist, the hypnotist, the Christian Scientist, and the faith-healer, with all shades of belief and unbelief, accomplish the same kinds of healing without medicine, when the disease is of the form which yields to that sort of treatment. The wonderful nature of an event, then, or the amount of power which seems to be involved in it, is no indication that it comes from God, and it proves nothing with regard to the character of the person through whom the event is caused.

The only way of telling whether anything is a manifestation of God, as the Christian conceives him, is to see whether it reveals the *character* of God—love and righteousness. We should believe that every event which shows the spirit of love and goodness in it, that is, which is evidently intended to manifest this spirit, and flows from such motives, is from God. If it comes through human beings, and shows such good motives in them, it proves that to that extent they are in harmony with God and his agents in the world. It does not, however, prove that they are different from other people in other ways—that they can foretell the future, that they cannot sin, that they can actually do supernatural works, or anything else of that sort.

CHAPTER V

MAN, SIN, AND SALVATION

"He arose and came to his father. But while he was yet afar off his father saw him and was moved with compassion and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him."—Luke 15:20.

41. Man is a spirit dwelling in a body but not entirely dependent upon it.—By a spirit we mean a being having power to think, feel, and will. Each of us knows directly that he has these powers and is therefore a spirit. We have learned from psychology that there is a parallelism between the thoughts and feelings which make up the stream of consciousness and the processes in our nervous systems. And it is quite certain that in normal human life our memories, thoughts, and feelings are dependent for their presence in consciousness upon the proper condition and working of the brain and nerves. No one, however, can imagine the nature of the connection between nervous processes and thoughts or feelings; and however they may be related, it is clear that they are not identical, for a thought or a feeling has no properties in common with what we mean by matter or energy. We know also that although our consciousness is largely determined by the situation and condition of our bodies, the converse is also true. We may determine what

sensations we will attend to, and where our bodies shall be. Our spirits are, then, not wholly dependent upon our bodies, and we have some good reasons for holding that they may continue to exist without bodies like those we have at present. This will be considered when we study the doctrine of immortality.

So far as religion is concerned, it is not particularly important what theory we hold in regard to how man came into being, providing we recognize that *God* brought him into being. There is good reason to believe that man on his physical side has developed from the manlike ape. This is certainly no more degrading a conception than the one that he was made directly from lifeless earth. The important question is not from what condition or form man sprang but what he *is*, and although man's body is in all essential respects like the bodies of other animals, his spirit places him almost infinitely above them all.

Tracing man's ascent through lower forms of life in nowise *accounts* for him. There is really no accounting for life without life, nor for thought without thought; and no materialistic theory can do any more than to describe some of the steps in the process by which living and spiritual beings have reached the stage to which humanity has attained. We cannot know how man came into being, but it is far more reasonable to believe that

it was through the will and power of God than through the play of non-spiritual energy upon lifeless matter.

42. In the nature of each man there is a narrow margin of freedom of choice and action, within which life is not determined by his surroundings nor by the character which he has inherited and developed up to that point.—Psychology as a science is "deterministic." It assumes that if all the circumstances affecting a man in any given case could be known, and the character and habits which he has developed up to the given moment were known, it could be predicted absolutely what he would think and choose and do the next moment, so that his whole life moves on with absolute machine-like precision, and under its circumstances could not possibly be anything else than it is. This conception of life, however, does not correspond at all to what every man feels to be true of himself and of others. We feel that we could choose the better or the worse, and that we are worthy of blame when we choose the worse, and deserve praise or approval when we choose the better. Of course this feeling is entirely deceptive if as a matter of fact we could not choose other than we do. In that case there can be no real responsibility, sin or righteousness, praiseworthiness or blameworthiness. But psychology cannot deny the universal presence of this *feeling* of

freedom and of responsibility, and on the other hand it can never fully account for any man's thought and action in actual practice, and can therefore never prove this feeling to be a mistaken one.

We should therefore hold that man is free to choose the better or worse, as this feeling best fits our experience and is most encouraging to the effort to become righteous. This belief in freedom is a matter of faith. Its truth cannot be demonstrated any more than the truth of determinism. But it is a better faith and therefore we ought to hold it.

The margin of freedom is a narrow one, but therefore of all the more significance. A man may turn quite around and start in the opposite direction in a narrow passage, and this is what occurs in "conversion." But a large part of each life is determined by its character and environment, so that an intimate friend can generally tell what a man will do in a given case. Yet in any given case if for that particular man two choices are offered which both attract him, he may choose the better, and thus grow stronger and better in character; or the worse, and take a step downward. The sum of these free and unpredictable choices and their general direction determine the moral destiny of the man.

43. Belief that God has given man freedom means belief that God has limited his own power and knowledge.—There are two reasons why men have held that God knows everything which happens or shall occur in the future, and that he has determined beforehand exactly how everything shall be. The first is that belief in the perfection of God seems to require that he be absolutely omniscient and omnipotent, and the second that we need to believe in this foreknowledge and predestination in order to believe that his kingdom will come, and that he will be able to accomplish his will and to help those who pray to him. But the difficulties and loss which come from such belief about God are greater than the gain. For if God predestines all that occurs, then he and he alone is responsible for all the sin and evil in the world, and cannot then be held to be a really righteous and loving God. And it does not really help matters to say that God *knows* everything before it occurs, and yet man is free to act, and is responsible for sin; for it is impossible to conceive of an event being known beforehand unless it is *determined* beforehand, and if it is determined then man is not free to choose at all.

Thus the highest Christian faith, and that which corresponds best to our experience and has the strongest tendency to make us feel our moral responsibility and act righteously, is that God

has given to man a certain degree of freedom, and thereby limited both his own power and his knowledge. We should hold, however, that his power still remains so great and his knowledge so thorough that he will accomplish his will at last, and will help every man who trusts in him, even though he is hindered in the accomplishment of his will by every man who sins against him—for sin is certainly opposition to his will, since he is good.

44. **A sin is any failure to choose the best that one knows, to live absolutely righteously, or to will to act from the best possible motives. The sin lies entirely in the motive; no action considered by itself is sinful.**—In section 6 it was explained that righteousness is doing what we would want everyone else to do under the same circumstances. To choose to do this is to choose the best that one knows, for we would want everyone to do the best thing for the welfare of others, when we were among the others concerned by his action. So finally we should want everyone to act from the best possible motives, or, more concretely, from love to others. Since this is righteousness, any failure to attain this is sin.

Sin may also be defined as wilful disobedience to God, and this is a more truly *religious* definition. The reason for beginning with another definition is that it shows more clearly and directly the nature of sin, and would apply to a man who did not believe

in God or who said that we cannot know what his will is so as to obey him. It is evident that if there be a perfectly righteous and loving God, he would require nothing more or less of man than perfectly righteous action, and such action we have defined above. On the other hand, every man who believes in duty or righteousness at all must acknowledge his obligation to be righteous, whether he believe in God or not.

It has been thought that God has given to men commandments with regard to certain actions or kinds of actions; that he should do some and refrain from others; and that sin is a failure to obey these injunctions. But in our study of the nature of the Bible and how to use it, we have seen that, in order to be able to recognize a command as being from God and for us, we must first be able to see that it is a command which requires us to do right. Even the Ten Commandments cannot be considered as God's commands to any particular person until he sees that action from the highest motives would require him to obey them. In the case of most of them, however, it is so evident that the highest motives would require compliance that their authority is immediately felt by almost everyone.

Many have difficulty at first in realizing that no action considered by itself is sinful. Until they have considered it carefully they might think that even if I did some act out of the deepest love for

others it might be sinful. Take murder or theft, they would say, are they not always wrong? But that depends on what is meant by those terms. They usually imply some evil motive, and action from an evil motive is, as we have said, always wrong. But it may be possible to kill a man from the highest motives, for example, in a surgical operation, in the effort to save his life, or when he is a dangerous criminal, in the effort to save the life of someone else whom he is trying to kill. So also we could imagine circumstances where everyone would consider it his duty to take someone's else property in order to avert some disaster, although to take the same thing under ordinary circumstances would be "stealing"—action from a selfish motive and therefore sinful. So with every kind of action, the motive determines its rightness or sinfulness. It will be easier to understand this if we ask what motive could make a man refrain from doing what his love for others prompted him to do. Suppose I think God requires me to go to church at a certain hour. It will therefore be sinful for me to do anything which would hinder me from such church attendance. But my love to others requires me in given circumstances to help a man who has "fallen among thieves," just at the hour for church. If I "pass by on the other side" and leave the man for the church, it will be because I desire the reward I think God will give me for

obeying him, more than the welfare of the man. In other words, I obey God from selfish motives. But a good God could not be pleased with such selfish action, and, as Jesus said, the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself is like to that to love God with all one's heart, and if one neglects the former he cannot do the latter.

It is common to say that our consciences tell us what is right and wrong, and accordingly to define sin as disobedience to conscience. This is well if conscience be rightly defined and understood. Conscience is the moral judgment, the power which values motives and decides which is the better. To obey conscience is therefore to act from the motive which one judges to be highest and best or to do what we would want everyone else to do in similar circumstances. But many people think of conscience as being the feeling of discomfort or of disapprobation with which they view certain actions planned or accomplished in their own lives, a feeling which in many cases has no relation to their judgment of the motives which they would have or did have in doing the act under consideration. This feeling in such cases is due to the taking-over of the views or feelings of others so that their disapprobation is feared or is accepted without criticism as one's own. If the judgment of conscience is applied to the *motives* for the action (which in any given case must be largely deter-

mined by what the person thinks its results will be) then conscience is the guide, and the only proper guide, of conduct. The Bible, books of ethics, civil laws, and other rules for conduct must be used in order to form the best judgment as to the results of different lines of action, and for the strengthening of the higher motives—they are all aids to the conscience but can never take its place, any more than the sun or lamps of any sort can take the place of a man's eyes.

45. **The worst result of sinning is the formation of a sinful character, or the gradual estrangement of oneself from God and good people.**—The pain and loss which result from sin may under certain circumstances be blessings, but the sin itself works only evil in the sinner. Punishment for sin can be intended only to prevent sin and reform the sinner, and so must be considered as really good, but the sin itself has no good results in the sinner. Every sinful act makes it easier to do the act again and tends to establish the habit. Every sinful choice tends to make the choice of the lower motives habitual. Thus continual sinning may so fix the character in sinful ways that it will become almost and perhaps quite impossible for the sinner to change and become good. When in religious language we speak of a man as being lost, we mean that he has formed habits of yielding to the lower motives and is becoming more and more degraded

in character so that if he keeps on in this direction he will finally lose everything good there is in him.

We can have real friendship and fellowship with people only when we can sympathize with them, enjoy what they enjoy, sorrow in their sorrow, value things somewhat as they value them. But for God and good people the highest values are those of character. The more I yield to lower motives the less sympathy I have for those who prefer the higher, and the farther I remove myself from them. And not only is the same thing true about our relations to God, but every sin is disobedience to God, and therefore puts me not only out of fellowship and sympathy but in direct antagonism to him. Thus he who continues in sin makes it more and more difficult to do or even to understand the will of God, and is in great danger of coming to believe finally that there is no God. And yet God is the power which creates and controls the universe, and in opposing it a man is on the way to inevitable destruction. God is the all-loving Father, and in turning from him, one is turning from all that is good and loving toward all that is base and evil.

46. Salvation is the deliverance of a man's character from an actual or possible sinful condition to a righteous condition, and from a condition of opposition and disobedience to God to one of fellowship and trust in God, and every means of bringing this about is a means of salvation.—Common ideas

of salvation have been that it is deliverance from the punishment of sin after death, and to a life of eternal pleasure and delight. It has often been thought and taught in various forms of Christianity, as well as other forms of religion, that there were certain ways by which a sinful man might, at any rate after mortal life, escape the penalty of his sins and live the life of happiness. In Christianity it has generally been held that this way of escape from punishment was made possible by the death of Jesus. The deeper thinkers have realized that such salvation must result in the change of the sinful character, or it could not deliver from the punishment. But very often it was the punishment which was the great thing to be saved from, and in many cases it has been thought that professing a creed or partaking of sacraments would insure the salvation of a man no matter how he continued in sin.

As spiritual ideas of God and man have become clearer, this position has changed in important respects. First, the significance of character has been more clearly recognized. It has been seen that a man's character determined very largely whether he were happy or not. A man who loves God and those about him will be happy in circumstances in which a bad man would be quite miserable, and a bad man in heaven would find the presence of good people about him so unpleasant

that he would not want to remain—it could not be a place of happiness for him. The making of the character right, then, is the first necessity in making a man happy, or bringing him to a real heaven.

Then it has become clear that if God love men as Jesus loved them, he would be ready to forgive them and receive them into fellowship with himself on no other conditions but those of repentance for sin and desire for such fellowship, just as Jesus received men on these conditions; and thus that these could be the only conditions of God's favor and of salvation so far as he is concerned. Repentance and the desire for forgiveness would be evidence that the character was moving in the right direction—away from sin and toward goodness. And the faith that God had forgiven the man must result in helping him to be better.

The great problem of salvation, then, is just the problem of making good character. If a man's character is becoming good he is being saved; if not, he is being lost, no matter what he believes or does not believe. And we must take this in a real and literal way. There must be no religious quibble by which a character that loves God and man shall be called bad or depraved because the man holds or fails to hold some particular belief; and no legal fiction whereby a bad character shall be called good under any circumstances. There is

a great truth in the doctrine of the "imputation" of Christ's righteousness to those who accept him, that is, who become his true followers and trust in the Father whom he revealed. But that truth is not that a bad man is looked upon as good, but that a man is judged by God not according to what he has attained but by what he is striving to attain. And the man who desires most of all to become Christlike, and strives with all his might to become so, is regarded by God with loving approval, even though the evil habits of the sinful life have not yet entirely lost their hold upon him.

The process of salvation may be going on in a man even before he has faith in God, although such faith is one of the most powerful means to salvation. But owing to intellectual experience or environment a man may not have learned how he may believe in God, and may think he cannot, while at the same time his life is growing better. In such cases we must recognize God's action just as clearly as when the man perceives that it is God who is saving him, and not deny God's work because the man in whom he is working does not understand it.

47. Conversion is a change from a general downward direction or evil development of character to a general upward direction or righteous development of character.—Few, if any of us, know anyone who has not some good in him, who does

not sometimes act from noble motives, take a step upward in character; but we should recognize clearly the distinction between the life of a man whose *controlling* motives are lower, who is gradually becoming worse in character, and the man who is struggling upward, desiring above all to become Christlike, to do right. The latter may often stumble in the way, he may even appear worse in character than the former, especially if the one who is growing worse has been brought up in good surroundings so that certain forms of goodness have become habitual in him. But the man who is moving in the right direction will some time gain the goal sought, although he start from a great way off; and the man whose direction is wrong is getting farther and farther from the home of the soul, although at the beginning he had a great advantage over the other man. Thus the important thing is the direction of movement. The word "conversion" means turning around or turning back, and as used in religion it means the change in the direction of a man's life from wrong to right.

If a man believe in a righteous God, then turning toward the right will mean for him turning toward God and accepting the guidance of his Spirit. If, on account of atheistic teaching, it is for a time impossible for him to believe in God, he may be none the less converted. He may take the upward direction, and choose the higher motives,

and until he is able to believe in God, the highest motives will be those of love to his fellow-men. We may be sure that God would be pleased with such a life, and that it is God's power which is helping the man to the better life, even though for a time it is not recognized as such.

In many cases it is impossible to know certainly whether another person is thoroughly converted or not. Outward actions are not always clear evidence of the movement of character, much less *professions* of faith. Many a life is vacillating for a period so that it is difficult to tell whether more is being gained or lost. We may be sure, however, that the man whose highest desire is for righteousness will become righteous, and receive God's help in gaining this desire, although the progress may seem slow for a time.

48. If the movement of character is in the right direction, it is of no importance to know the time of conversion or even that there has been any conversion.—When a man has been living a very sinful life for a considerable time, and then stops the downward and commences the upward movement, the change will be a very noticeable one—he will have a "remarkable experience" of conversion. There is, however, no good reason why a child brought up in a really Christian home should have any experience of a general movement in the wrong direction. He may learn from those about

him, by precept and example, what the right life is and how much better it is than the wrong, and so be always growing better, moving upward, in general, although like converted persons he stumble sometimes in the way. It is a great mistake to expect of such that they shall have such experiences of conversion as those do who have long continued in sin.

It has sometimes been thought that the teaching in John 3:3, etc., is contrary to the position taken above. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." A study of the context shows the meaning to be that the Spirit of God must give to a man the nature that loves righteousness in order that he may "enter the kingdom of God"; that being a descendant of Abraham or fulfilling the ceremonial law was not sufficient. But the evidence of the work of the Spirit, like that of the blowing of the wind, is to be found in the results, and when we have before us the life which shows the presence in it of the Spirit of God, there is room for no further question. When we have a live child before us, we need no birth register to prove that it has been born. The love-inspired life is the conclusive evidence of the presence of God's Spirit, and in many cases we shall not be able to find any specific time when the work of the Spirit in that life clearly began.

As will be seen in the next section, we cannot

deny the universal tendency to sin in every human being. We know of no one except Jesus who has grown into self-directing life without showing that the nature he has inherited or the temptations which surround him were such that he did not remain without sin. These facts have been the foundation of the doctrine of "original sin." While we cannot now hold the doctrine in its older form, we must admit the facts, and the consequent need which every man has for salvation, for "grace" to overcome his sinful tendencies. A man needs not only forgiveness for the sins he has committed, and help to overcome his besetting sins, but he needs to develop such a character as shall be fully and positively righteous. Many a man has not committed certain sins simply because the temptation to commit them has not been strong enough, and not because he is really good in character. He may thus need salvation as truly as the one who has yielded to temptation.

49. Salvation is a process requiring a considerable time for its completion, and all teaching that it may be completed in a single moment is likely to lead to error and deception.—In the past, salvation has been distinguished from "sanctification," which meant originally making holy, or separating unto God, but is better understood now as meaning the act or process of making *righteous*. The highest meaning of holiness is righteousness,

although the word has been used with very different meanings in the past. When salvation was thought of as deliverance from the liability to eternal punishment, then it was accomplished by God's act of pardon, as soon as the sinner had met the conditions. And we may recognize, still, the great value of the choice of will by which a man abandons a sinful life, consecrates himself to God and righteousness, and accepts the forgiveness of God for his sin. But we see now that the importance of this experience lies in the fact that it is the beginning of a great process, and not the complete attainment of the thing desired.

For us, therefore, salvation and sanctification mean essentially the same thing, and it is important that we recognize that for any sinful human being a process is involved, and not a sudden act or experience which is then complete. The great philosopher Kant held that it would take an infinite time for a will (i.e., character) to become perfectly good. At any rate we may question whether characters do become perfectly good within the brief bounds of mortal life; and our experience is not to be doubted, that many Christian people have not yet attained to perfection at the close of human life. We find in general that the better a man becomes, the more conscious he is of moral imperfection, and the higher his ideal of perfect character rises. We know, further, from psychology, that it is impos-

sible for the mass of thoughts and habits which have been developed through many years to be totally changed in a moment, although the general direction of the life may be thus instantly changed.

There are two serious dangers in the teaching which some sects have maintained, that a man may be perfectly sanctified in an instant. The first is that a man who is seeking for God's fullest blessing, and thinks God will thus instantly sanctify him, will, if he be honest with himself, be disappointed, and perhaps abandon his Christian faith altogether for a time, as a friend of mine once did, under such conditions, thinking that God would not give him what he had given others.

The other danger, more serious still, is that of self-deception or hypocrisy when a man claims to have been thus "sanctified" and yet frequently does wrong. His actions prove his words, and perhaps even his thought with regard to himself, false. Such a man often says, in the phrase of his sect, that it is not *he* who commits the sin, but the "old man" in him, for which he is no longer responsible, or else that what would in others be sin is not in him, *because* he is sanctified, or because he is "no more under law but under grace" or something of that sort. But this is merely to introduce moral confusion into his life in the place of mental. If sin be what we have judged it to be, we should always call it by the same name and not

try to make ourselves or others believe that we are what we know we are not. We must carefully avoid all juggling with moral distinctions in the name of "religious truths," for it throws serious discredit on religion.

50. The doctrine of "justification by faith" means that we attain to conscious fellowship with God through trust in his forgiving love and not through any number of good deeds.—We have laid special stress on the "ethical" side of salvation, that is, its character as deliverance from sin, because that is fundamental and can be appreciated and applied by all, whatever their belief or lack of belief about God. We need to give a little special attention to the religious side, that is, that which concerns our relations to God, both to understand the doctrines of the past, and to get the value of them for our life today. Paul experienced the fact that "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (Rom. 3:20), and Luther and many others who were striving to get rid of sin and do good works so that their lives might be pleasing to God, have had the experience of despair of ever attaining to such a condition that they could claim God's approval for their lives. They found at last that they must abandon such attempts to become good enough to please God, and merely trust to God's love and mercy to receive them while they were still sinful and imperfect. They found

then, too, that the confidence that they received when they thus simply trusted in God's love and free, undeserved forgiveness gave them new hope and power to become really righteous.

These experiences should be very instructive for us. They should teach us that, on the side of character, self-satisfaction is deadly; and that the only safe and only absolutely essential thing is that our controlling motive should be that of love to God and man, and our constant effort to become better. They should teach us that on the religious side we cannot please God by anything less than trust in his love and free forgiveness, and earnest desire to do his will, and that "good works" please him only as the proof of this controlling motive of love, and the presence of this desire to do his will. Any good works except those which flow from such love and obedience arise from lower motives and are therefore really sinful. So we still are concerned with character—the character of love and childlike trust (as opposed to Pharisaic self-righteousness) that pleases God, so that we are "justified," that is, approved, in his sight. It is our effort and not our attainment that pleases him. We shall see in the next chapter in what sense it is true that we are justified through faith in Jesus Christ. But we may say here that it is because through Jesus we come to this trust in God that we are thus justified, through the love of God manifested in Jesus, and

not through the acceptance of any creed, or particular belief about the nature or work of Jesus himself except as it brings us to this confidence in the love and forgiveness of God.

51. We should believe that all human beings are children of God until they have absolutely renounced his fatherhood by the destruction of everything good in them.—By being children of God we mean having something of the spiritual nature that God has, some capability of responding to good motives, the influence of the Spirit of God, and such relation to God that on *his* side nothing is lacking to make our fellowship and communion with him of the highest nature. This position is the higher Christian teaching from the time of Jesus to the present, but it differs from other things that have been taught in two ways. First, it has been taught that, through the sin of our first parents or in some other way, men have *entirely* lost the character of God, *totally* defaced his image in them, and thus become "totally depraved" and "children of the Devil." Generally it has been admitted that very few human beings seemed thus entirely bad to themselves or others, but it was explained that whatever good appeared in them was the action of God's Spirit, while the evil in them was their own true nature. Of course this is not a fair way to judge anyone. If we hold a man responsible for the evil that is in him, we must give him

credit for the good too. We may well say that all the good in man is due to the presence in him of God's Spirit; but that is properly only another way of saying that he has retained something of the image of God in him, or is still a child of God, although a fallen one. The term "regeneration," which means rebirth, is a figurative expression denoting the action on God's part which corresponds to man's repentance and conversion. Both expressions refer to the changing of the direction of a man's life, and the meaning of both is fulfilled when the life is developing in the right way. But as a deaf man *cannot* hear, and a blind man *cannot* see, so a "totally depraved" man, one in whom was nothing good, no higher motives, no desire for righteousness, could not respond to the influence of God's Spirit, and so conversion or regeneration would be impossible.

The second teaching differing from our position is that God could not love a man, on account of his sin, until something had been done by Jesus to make such love possible, and the man had accepted this work of Jesus as done for him. But the true teaching of Jesus and the New Testament is that it is the very love of God which is revealed in Jesus, and that God loves every man whom he has made and desires the salvation of all. We know not whether anyone ever becomes so bad as completely to destroy his divine sonship, and burn out every-

thing good that is in him, but we should believe that if anyone desires God's love and forgiveness it is because he is God's child, and God will never cast him out, and we should never abandon anyone as hopeless. It is not sonship to God, that we are to seek, but the "spirit of sonship," the spirit of trust and obedience that should be in the life of every child of God, that is in every man whom God has made.

52. All sin is punished, but the purpose of the punishment is not to "give a man what he deserves" but to prevent sin and reform the sinner.—We all recognize that it is right for those who have consciously and intentionally done wrong to suffer for their wrongdoing, but we can imagine no just way of apportioning to a man the punishment which he deserves. For what a man deserves must depend on the circumstances under which the wrong was done, the motives of the deed and the strength of the temptation. But no one can know the inner working of another's mind, the strength of his passions, the reasons for his ignorance or prejudice; and thus no man can rightly decide what the punishment ought to be in a given case. This becomes still clearer when we remember that a given penalty may be a heavy punishment for one man and none at all for another. For one man death is the most severe possible penalty. Another may desire to die. So in the case of human justice,

the only right way to do is to try to make the punishment of such a form and degree as to protect society in the best way and to reform the criminal if possible, so that he will become a useful member of society. Any penal system different from this is a relic of barbarism.

We may believe that God knows just what punishment a man deserves in any given case, and we see that to a certain extent, at any rate, the punishment for sin is automatically adjusted to the sin. The worst result of sinning is the degradation of character and the estrangement from God and good people, and these results must depend directly on the nature and strength of the evil motive. But even in the case of God, or perhaps we should say, especially in the case of God, it is better to believe that the only purpose of punishment is the prevention of sin and reformation of the sinner. This is all that anyone can rightfully require from either human or divine justice. We want the penalty to counterbalance the motives to the crime, so that a man will see that he cannot gain by crime, but will always lose. So we should believe that God punishes sin because of his love for all men, the sinner as well as those sinned against.

It is clear, then, that it will best deter from sin if the punishment follows it inevitably, but best encourage repentance and improvement if the

forgiveness and cessation of punishment follow immediately upon repentance. This we may and should believe. The worst results of sinning, the decay of character and the estrangement from God, cease when we turn from sin and trust in God's forgiveness.

53. **The results of sin which continue after repentance should be looked upon no longer as punishment but as means of discipline and the development of character, as blessings and not as evil.**—On account of God's love we should expect forgiveness to follow immediately upon repentance, and we cannot think of punishment as continuing after one has been pardoned. But we see that the results of sin in suffering and loss often continue long after the sin has been repented of and has ceased. We can see also that these results may be of great value to the sinner as well as to others in deterring from sin and showing its awful nature, and that if taken in the right spirit they may prove of great value in the strengthening and purifying of character, developing patience, sympathy, and other virtues. Thus we should regard the after-results of sin, when it has been forgiven, as intended only for good, and no longer as punishment. The problem of evil other than sin has been more fully considered in section 38.

From the foregoing sections it should be clear that faith is necessary to salvation only in so far as

it keeps a man's character developing rightly, or helps him to righteousness. Without faith of some sort, at least in the value of righteousness in some of its expressions, no man can or will be or become righteous. The value of *Christian* faith is not that no man can be saved without it in all of its details, but that it is the quickest way to righteousness and to God. If a man truly and constantly holds it he is certain to be becoming steadily better, and this in a greater degree and shorter time than would be possible without it.

In the next chapter we consider some of the most important ways in which the life and work of Jesus may help to this highest faith and fullest life.

CHAPTER VI

WHAT SHALL WE BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS?

"But all things are of God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."—II Cor. 5:18, 19*a*.

54. No belief with regard to Jesus is of any value except as it helps a man to a better character or fuller life.—This must be true if God is righteous and loving, and has the spirit which was shown in Jesus. Many people have thought that God has revealed to men certain truths about Jesus, or about himself, through Jesus, and that he would refuse to forgive and save any man, no matter how much he loved God and men, unless he believed this revelation; and some have thought that if a man should believe this revealed truth about Jesus, he might be saved, as a reward for believing it, or from a sort of a magical efficacy obtained through believing it, no matter how wicked he might be and remain. The true position is that God has revealed great truths about himself and human life through Jesus, which, if a man believe, will be of the greatest assistance to him in becoming righteous and in obtaining the highest faith in God; and the true faith in Jesus is thus the greatest power for the salvation or transformation of life and character.

We may be sure that a righteous, loving God could require of no man any belief as a condition of his favor, except such as would be possible for the man under his peculiar circumstances to accept, and such as would be accepted by the man if he were trying to find out the truth and choose the right. God would not reward us with forgiveness or salvation or heaven or anything else good because we did what we could not help doing. Such action deserves no reward. It is when we choose to do the better of two or more things that we have shown ourselves worthy of approval and reward. There are various things about the life of Jesus which a man would be compelled to believe if the proper evidence were presented to him, and which he could not possibly believe unless they were at least told him in such a way as to make him think they were true. In such cases, although the facts accepted or rejected might be of value to the man, we could not think of God as rewarding or punishing the man, since he had no choice in the matter. But where there is a choice, the only thing which makes one belief better than another is that the one will improve the life and character of the man more than the other. This we have seen in the discussion about faith and knowledge, in the first chapter. Therefore it is clear that it is only such belief as a man would choose because of its value in making his life richer or his char-

acter better which could please God or be of any value to men.

55. We should believe that Jesus was a real man; that is, that he was limited in power and knowledge in the same way that other men are.— We shall consider in later sections the reasons why it is of great importance to believe in the true humanity of Jesus. Practically all great theologians, from the earliest times to the present, have recognized the importance of this belief. We have here to consider what is meant by being a man. We have already considered what human nature is in section 41. It includes such relation of the spirit to the body that the former is largely dependent on and limited by the latter. All the data for the knowledge and thought of the mind come through the body and its senses. Even our highest and most spiritual faith must be represented and pictured in terms gained first from the world of sense. While it is true that there are some phenomena as those of telepathy, mind-reading, clairvoyance, etc., which in some cases we cannot doubt to be genuine, and in which there is apparently some communication of thought without the medium of the senses, even in such instances there can be no confirmation of the truth of the impressions thus communicated, without the senses, and the sphere of such communication is comparatively small,

and entirely out of the control of the ordinary healthy person.

It is clear, then, that the knowledge of any human being is and must be very limited indeed, compared with all that might be known. And it is further to be most carefully considered that such limitation in knowledge is one of the essential conditions of our moral experience and development. If every man *knew* that every sin would be punished, and could foresee the results, no one would want to sin. It is because we cannot *know* beyond a doubt, that righteousness will always bring good, and sin always evil, that sin is so tempting and virtue so difficult, and that a man has a *duty* to choose the best faith when he might choose something else. We have no moral obligation to do the things we cannot help doing. The moral obligation, the duty, commences when there is a choice between different possibilities. There is much truth in the saying of Socrates that "sin is ignorance," for although we knowingly sin, we never knowingly injure ourselves, and if we *knew* that every sin injured us far more than it benefited us, we should not sin. As most if not all human beings, then, are so limited in knowledge that they cannot know certainly what the results of their actions will be, and cannot *know* beyond doubt the existence of God and of a life beyond the grave, and the truth of the other most important doctrines

of religion, so we must hold that Jesus, if he was a real human being, was limited in the same way, and that religious truth was *faith* for him as well as for us. Having a human body would not make him a man in any true sense if he did not have the other limitations which human beings have. If he was tempted in the same way that we are, and developed character in the same way that we do; if he by being human himself could enter into complete sympathy with human beings, and could become in any way a real example for our lives, then he must have been limited as we are.

What has been said above has been concerned primarily with limitation in knowledge. The same general arguments apply also to limitations in power. If Jesus could have done anything he wished to do, then he was different from any other human being who ever lived; or, in other words, he was not truly human. We may see, on the one hand, that limitation in knowledge would necessarily imply limitation in power; and on the other, that if he had had actual superhuman powers, i.e., powers which no other human being could control or use in any way, whether in answer to prayer or otherwise, then he could not completely sympathize with men who were thus limited, nor be tempted as they were. It will readily be seen that much of our temptation and sin is directly related to our weakness and inability

to control events as we should like to do. For instance, in modern times a large part of the temptation and sin which belong to men is related to the effort to make money, i.e., to obtain the "good things" necessary or desirable for life, which can be obtained only through gift, hard work, or dishonest means. But if we had power to obtain any of these things, or all of them, without work, these temptations would disappear, and if Jesus could have obtained all that he wished of food, clothes, money, etc., he would have had no such temptations as those which form a most serious part of ours, and give rise in one way or another to by far the larger part of the social evils which we know.

We should note that the limitations under which Jesus lived, although of the same kinds, were not therefore necessarily those of the *average* man, nor even those of the best, wisest, or most skilful man that we may know of. They were the limitations which are implied in human nature, but what the final bounds of human knowledge and power are, when it shall have made the fullest possible discoveries of the laws of matter and mind, and when it shall have come into complete harmony with God, we have not yet the faintest knowledge. Jesus may have had powers which no other human being has yet attained, because of his perfect harmony with God and man, and still

have been subject to the human limitations of knowledge and power.

56. We should believe that an ideal, sinless human being would be the most perfect possible revelation of God's nature and character which man could receive.—We can understand the nature and character of other beings only in so far as we have similar natures and characters. Several centuries before Christ, Xenophanes, the Greek philosopher, asked: "By what right do we attribute human form to the gods? Everyone," he said, "imagines them to be like himself. Negroes think of the gods as black and flat-nosed; Thracians, as blue-eyed and red-haired, and if the horses and oxen could paint, doubtless they would represent the gods as horses and oxen." With these words Xenophanes thought to show the absurdity of what is known as "anthropomorphism," that is, thinking of the gods as being like men. But although he was to a certain extent right, that is, in holding that we should not think of God as being like ourselves in all respects, in outward appearance, in sensuous needs and passions—yet he was wrong in thinking that we can truly worship or even imagine a god who is totally unlike ourselves, and indeed we must say that our idea of God must be limited to the ideas which come from our knowledge of ourselves and of the world about us. We should not say that we can

thus form adequate and satisfactory conceptions of God, and we find it necessary to hold that our highest thought of God represents only a small part of his real nature, character, and power. Nevertheless, our ability to form any conception of God at all, depends on our own experience, and we must use the forms of our own experience to construct an idea of God for ourselves. As a man who has been blind from birth can form no idea of what it means to see, and a man who has never heard does not know what sound means, so we cannot imagine any particular powers in God, of which we have no experience, although we may well imagine that he has many powers of which we can form no definite conception because we do not possess them.

If we are to have a faith in God which will make us love him, and which will help us to love one another, to become righteous, then the most important element in our faith in God must be the thought that he is of a loving, altogether admirable, and attractive character, and that the closest harmony and fellowship with him would make us most nearly what we should be in relation to our fellow-men. The thought of God's knowledge and power as universal and complete is the thought which will most readily be developed in men's minds, and which the study of the great religions of the world will show has developed most quickly

and easily. The experience which each man has of some knowledge and power in himself, and his feeling of dependence upon the forces at work in the world about him, lead naturally to the thought of a great and powerful mind which controls these forces. But among men we find both power and knowledge possessed by characters of different sorts, tyrants, bullies, criminals, grafters, philanthropists, statesmen, etc., and so they are not necessarily associated with any one kind of character. It is therefore more of a question what sort of character man will think of as belonging to God.

Every man has, unless he destroy them, the powers of reason and conscience, enabling him to judge the kind of motives and the kind of character which have the highest value. When men have developed the idea that God is morally good—an idea which is found wherever we have a real civilization—then it is most natural for them to attribute to God the best moral character of which they conceive. But men know moral character from their own experience of their own characters and of those of other men, and the highest character which they come to know will naturally determine in large measure their ideals of the best possible character. If a man should appear whose character was actually ideal, that is, whose life was determined by the highest conceivable motives,

then such a man would show the character which it would be most proper to attribute to God; and unless men had already had as high an ideal of the character of God as his life presented, it would be likely to fix that ideal for the future. And if God be the greatest and best conceivable being, then such a man would be the most perfect revelation of the nature or character of God which it would be possible for men to have. We have seen (cf. especially sections 30 and 31) that the best faith requires us to believe that God has the best possible moral character, or the character of the best conceivable man, and as our highest ideal of the character of God must be based on our highest experience of human character, we must conclude that the best human character which exists would be the best actual presentation of the character of God in human form, and that if such an actual human character were in reality a sinless character, one completely determined by the highest faith in God and deepest love for man, we should be able to say that it was the most complete revelation of God's nature or character which could be made.

57. **It is reasonable to believe that the sketch of the life of Jesus given in the Gospels is, in its main features, historically true.**—Questions as to the origin, authorship, date, and degree of historical accuracy of the four gospels have required many

volumes for their discussion and engaged the most careful and thorough investigation of some of the greatest scholars of the last century, and the problems are by no means all solved or settled. We cannot here present any of the details of the problems or their attempted solutions, but give what we believe to be the general results of the best scholarship. Some scholars have gone so far as to assert that there is practically no historical element in our Gospels whatever. We believe, however, that their arguments are very unsatisfactory and have been sufficiently answered by clearer and more scientific thinkers than they are. The evidence is good that the Gospels give us accounts of the words and acts of a real man, called Jesus, based on the memories of the disciples who were present with Jesus and heard his words and saw his deeds. There can be no reasonable doubt that some errors have crept into the accounts of Jesus' life as we have it, and that we should certainly expect under the circumstances. There seems no likelihood that any written record of Jesus' words and actions was made during his earthly life, or for some few years after it, and we all know how certain it is that words repeated and events narrated from memory of what happened some years before, will be inaccurate in details, and will be colored by the thoughts and experiences of the narrator quite unintentionally. We note also

that no claim is made in the Gospels to any unusual accuracy in the narratives, and we find indisputable evidence that for the first three gospels some common written or verbal source was largely used, so that in general they do not represent three independent accounts, but one primary account to which additions were made and in which changes were made in arrangement, etc., by three or more different authors or editors.

After these elements have been taken into consideration, we find that we have in the Gospels by no means a carefully arranged and fairly complete biography, but at least a number of pictures or sketches giving impressions which were made by the life and words of Jesus upon those among whom he lived. The accounts indicate that he taught to others the faith which he himself had, in a loving, righteous, heavenly Father of all men, who was ready to forgive and receive even the most sinful who repented of his sin and desired forgiveness and the righteous life. Jesus himself showed the same loving spirit which he taught belonged to God, and showed no evidence that he was conscious of being sinful himself, while he was the sternest judge of sin wherever he found it. He also did many wonderful works, certainly of healing, and perhaps of other kinds. He was conscious of having a close relation to the God of whom he taught, and of having a special work to do by the power

and Spirit of God for men. His love for God and for men was so great that he did things which he knew would bring him into serious conflict with the Jewish authorities, and be the means of his being put to death at their demands. In some way, after his death he convinced his disciples that he was still living. And, as we see in the Acts of the Apostles and the rest of the New Testament, with this assurance that his work had after all been successful in the highest degree (instead of being, as at his death it seemed, an utter failure) and that through him they came into communion and fellowship with God himself, the disciples preached the new truths which had come to them, and helped others to have the same new experiences of communion with God which they had, and gradually established the Christian church, although they regarded it at first as only the highest and true form of the Jewish religion and not as something essentially new, different, or opposed in any way to it. We believe that the best scholars of the world, both "conservative" and "radical," would agree that we have good reasons to believe that the events roughly described above really occurred. We believe also that in this brief description of the historical facts narrated in the Gospels we have the essential elements which we need for the best possible conception of the value of the life and work of Jesus.

58. It is reasonable and helpful to believe that Jesus was in character sinless—completely righteous—moved by the highest motives, and therefore the most perfect possible revelation of God to men. —The reasonableness of believing that Jesus was sinless has already been pointed out. If the New Testament records are trustworthy, then Jesus not only made upon his disciples the impression of living a life completely determined by righteous principles, particularly the highest love for God and men, but also, although having a most sensitive moral nature and most accurate moral judgment, was conscious of no sin in himself to be repented of or removed. Some students have found fault with some of his words and actions, and thought that they indicated some moral weakness or error. Without taking up the points raised in detail, we must notice that we cannot judge accurately of the motives behind particular acts, and that the only valid question with regard to the acts criticized is not, Were they such as *we* could do with the highest motives, or such as did in fact result in the best possible way? but, Were the motives of Jesus the highest, when he did the acts in question? We must answer that no low motives are assignable for these cases, and that the general character of the work of Jesus and the apparent fact that he was conscious of no sin are very strong evidence that he was without sin.

If we have good reason to believe that Jesus thus had a thoroughly righteous character, and that this character was bound up with, and largely explained by, his unfailing faith in God and unique consciousness that his words and works were in a special way God's, that he had a peculiar mission to reveal God to men, then we have very good reason to believe that Jesus was such a revelation of the character of God—the most perfect possible revelation to men, which we have seen (section 56) a sinless human life would be. Such a faith would have two special values: first, it would indicate that God *intentionally* revealed himself to men, in this most perfect conceivable way, and would thus help us to believe in the personal nature of God and his warm and direct interest in humanity and desire that all men should come to know him; and secondly, it would be a special reason why we should think that the outstanding moral features of the life and teaching of Jesus must be a revelation of the most significant elements in the character of God himself, and thus give an added weight to them, whatever they might be, as divine attributes. We should be compelled to say that God could not be less admirable in character than Jesus, and that whatever we found in the character of Jesus which was most helpful and attractive should be attributed to God, his Father and ours.

59. In the life and death of Jesus we have the strongest possible evidence and most remarkable manifestation of the character of God as hating sin, but loving all men and desiring to forgive and cleanse them from their sins, of his suffering on account of the sinfulness of men and for the sake of saving them from their sin, and being ready to do anything, to make the greatest possible sacrifice for their salvation.—If, as we have seen there is good reason to believe, the Gospels give us any adequate idea of the character and life of Jesus, then we must maintain the truth of this proposition even apart from the question of the absolute sinlessness and unique consciousness of Jesus, although if these things be admitted, the argument may appear much stronger. As we have shown, the best human character must be the one most like the character of God, of which we can know. Any noble man, then, shows the divine character to the extent that he is noble. It is hardly questioned that the character described in the Gospels and commonly attributed to Jesus is the highest which human history presents. We need only to consider it, then, with a little care to find that the striking elements in it are those which we consider here.

The awfulness of sin is seen not only in the preaching of Jesus, but also by contrast with his own righteous and loving life. It stands out in

peculiar horror as we see that it was the sinfulness of the people among whom he labored which caused his suffering and death—the jealousy and envy of the priests and rulers, and the anger and hatred of those whose sins were condemned and whose hypocrisy was exposed. It is clear, however inevitable his death may have been under the circumstances, that he made no effort to avoid it, but rather, in a sense, courted it by the bold continuance of his work when he knew the danger that threatened him. He thus, so far as he was concerned, voluntarily submitted to the hatred and anger of the people, that they might see the more clearly the awfulness of their sin and the depth of his love. In his death, then, the horror of sin and the power of love and righteousness stand out in the strongest possible contrast. The spirit of forgiveness which he showed all through his ministry has a splended manifestation in the familiar words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," uttered as he was being crucified. His preaching—"Love your enemies"—and his acts show the love that included every human being in its scope.

This character, then, unsurpassed in history, must be believed to belong to God, whom we cannot think to be excelled in power or goodness by any man whom he has made—least of all, then, by one who is in constant communion and fellowship

with him, and finds in him the source of all his life and power. When one begins to realize that God himself has this character, the strongest force has come into operation for the reconciling of man unto God, the strongest motives are aroused for turning from sin to God, and living in the power of the Spirit of love, which is the Spirit of God himself. This revelation of God in the life and death of Jesus is thus the greatest element in the atonement, or the bringing of man into harmony with God.

60. In Jesus, the most perfect revelation of God, we have the "incarnation of God" or "God manifest in the flesh"—a concrete human figure in which our faith in God may center.—In the early forms of religion, when God was thought to dwell literally in a temple, or to appear occasionally in visible form in certain places, or to manifest his power directly and supernaturally in certain visible or tangible ways, it was easy for faith in his existence, providence, and activity to be strong and vivid. As the thought of God becomes more spiritual, there is a tendency for it to become more elusive and unreal. When we realize that we cannot see or hear or touch God in a literal way, there is great danger that we shall think that we can know little or nothing about him, or that he seem so far away that he cannot be concerned about us, and we need not be about him. The more

spiritual a religion becomes, the greater need there is for special efforts and methods to make the thought of God appeal strongly to the imagination —to help men to have a pure and at the same time real, definite, and vivid faith in him. But the naming of attributes or qualities of character and person is a very abstract, and for most people unsatisfactory and insufficient, way of promoting real acquaintance with a person. The Hebrews had a vivid idea of Jehovah because of their accounts of his messages and commands and revelations to them through their prophets, and his dealings with them, bringing them out of the "house of bondage" into the "land flowing with milk and honey," and of the ways in which he cared for them and trained them, rewarding their virtue and punishing their sin. Their records of God's words and especially his acts made his character vivid and real to them. But as we cannot accept all of these stories as literal history, since we find the truth clothed in anthropomorphic forms which belong to earlier stages of thought, there is danger that we shall lose the truth and vividness, the feeling of reality which they gave, in our thought of God. We find, then, in our accounts of the life and words of Jesus, the picture of such a character as belongs to our highest conception of God. If the picture is historical, then we have in him, in a true sense, "God manifest

in the flesh" or "God incarnate"; for if properly understood, those phrases express the idea which has been already presented, of the fullest manifestation which *could* be made of God in human form. And even if the picture should not be in all respects historical, it nevertheless presents in a concrete form, as a description of a human life, the highest ideal we can have of the nature of God. While we must hold that the important thing is to have the vivid, powerful faith in the "Christlike God," and that when one has that faith he has the central and essential element in the Christian religion, however he may have come to that faith, yet we must say that it is the embodiment of this faith in the concrete figure of the man, Jesus, which has given to Christianity its distinctive character and peculiar power, just for the reason presented, that it has made this conception of God real, vivid, and personal. As we saw in the last section that it is faith in God as righteous, loving, and suffering for sin that is the strongest force, drawing men from sin and to God, so we see here that it was "God incarnate" or the revelation of God in the man Jesus which has most clearly revealed this character of God and made this faith both possible and vivid, and that in this great way Jesus made atonement for us—made us "at-one" with God, became the *mediator* of salvation, that is, the means by which the way

of salvation was shown to us most clearly, and became the *Savior* of men. But there is also one other great element in this "at-one-ment" which we must consider now.

61. **It is of great value to man to have a perfect example, an ideal character as model and inspiration for his own life, and it is also of great value to believe that it is possible for a real man, in sinful surroundings, to live the ideal, sinless life. Both of these values we have given to us in Jesus.**— Where many volumes have been written on the subject, it will of course be impossible to do justice to the ideal elements in the character of Jesus, as pictured in the Gospels, in a few words. It may nevertheless be useful to call attention to some of the striking features of his life. His life, then, gives us the perfect faith in God naturally and completely united with, and expressed in, the fullest love for man. It is pre-eminently the life of service to others, and thus gives to the world the most-needed ideal, which, if it had been adequately expressed in the lives of his disciples in the Christian church from his day on, would have made Christianity the religion of all mankind, and established the kingdom of God on earth, by this time, perhaps not completely, but in a form which yet remains a far-off Utopia. This expression of the spirit of loving service is thus the complete realization of the ethical ideal, that is, the ideal of

duty or of the righteous life among men, and it is at the same time the expression of one of the two fundamental elements in the highest religion, which is the life flowing from love to God and men. It is to be noted that this life is pure and self-sacrificing, but not ascetic, nor one of retirement from the world; that pleasure is enjoyed and not avoided, but it is not sought as an end. The life is not in any way weak or effeminate, even though it is, to some extent at least, one of non-resistance to physical force. It is thoroughly manly, exhibiting the highest courage, firmness, and strength.

The conclusion of the earthly life of Jesus has a very peculiar value as an example for succeeding generations, in that he was faithful unto death. Whether or not he could have avoided death, as we have noticed before, he did not do so, nor make any effort to do so; and his death was the natural result of the conflict of his righteous life with the sinful lives which surrounded it. It could readily be imagined that he might have found good reasons for avoiding such an early and cruel closing of his ministry on earth, and might have found ways of doing so, without violating any of the ordinary rules for right conduct. But a little thought will show us the immeasurable value for mankind of the fact that he suffered the bitterest possible result of the righteous life, even the shameful, agonizing death, forsaken by friends,

rejected by adherents as well as by the religious leaders of the people, with the outward appearance of utter failure as a result of his whole life-work. For again and again have his disciples been called upon to give up their own lives as the price of their loyalty to him and to the highest interests of their fellow-men, and without such an example from their leader and Lord, who can say how many of them would have been faithful unto death? If Jesus had not paid the uttermost price for the privilege of serving humanity, would it not be very likely that his disciples would say, when the final sacrifice was demanded: "The Master did not give up his life for his faith or his work—it is not likely that he would expect us to do so. We must yield a point here, or turn aside there, to save our lives. What service can we perform after we are dead?" And so there would have been a measuring of the amount of faithfulness required by God, and not a complete and unquestioning faithfulness. But history shows that the example of Jesus, followed by many thousands of martyrs in all lands, and followed, in spirit, by many times their number who were ready for the uttermost sacrifice, although not called upon to make it, has been one of the most powerful forces in promoting the spread and purifying the spirit of Christianity. The death of Jesus, then, was not only, as we have already seen, the supreme manifestation of the

suffering love of God, but also the supreme manifestation of the faithfulness of the ideal human life, and thus again of the love of God for men (in giving them such an example through Jesus) and of the love of Jesus, the ideal man, for men, thus completing the perfect example for human life—not, of course, to be followed in details, but in spirit and fundamental principles.

The second value referred to in the thesis of this section is one which is often not recognized, but which should be constantly kept in view. It is a very evil and false doctrine, that every man is constantly sinning, consciously or unconsciously, and must expect so to continue until the end of mortal life. The sinful life should not be looked upon as the normal human life, but as the abnormal life, and the man with the right faith in God must expect to be constantly and increasingly triumphing over every evil motive which he finds within himself. Although the common experience of mankind may not favor the faith that many, if any, of us shall be able, during our earthly lives, completely to avoid yielding to the lower motives for periods of months or years (although we may find frequent cases where this seems to be at least approximated), yet we should expect this experience to become more and more frequent in the future, as the spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of God, becomes more dominant in its influence over both indi-

viduals and society; and we should expect the time to come, when—not after, but *during* the earthly life—most men, perhaps all men, shall be *completely* ruled by the spirit of love to God and to men. If we seriously take Jesus as our example, and really believe, as we have good grounds for doing, that he, a real human being, subject to the same sort of limitations, weaknesses, and temptations which belong to our condition, yet yielded to none of these temptations—*never* failed in his love for God and men—then certainly it will greatly strengthen our faith in the possibility of the sinless life for *us*, and we shall never again be satisfied as so many people are, with lives that are outwardly respectable, or, at best, ruled only part of the time by the spirit of love, and yielding much of the time to selfish habits and evil thoughts. The danger of some forms of "holiness" doctrine has been pointed out in section 49. There is perhaps greater danger in the idea that sin is necessary to human life, and that we cannot hope completely to overcome it, and need not struggle to do so, until the body dies.

62. **Every way in which the life of Jesus reveals God and helps us to turn from sin and become righteous is a means of atonement or of reconciling man unto God, and the atoning work of Jesus consists in the sum of such influences.**—One of the greatest hindrances to progress in the perception of

religious truth, and to the co-operation of religious persons for the carrying-on of work for humanity, has been the failure to admit relativity or incompleteness in the views which have been gained. Probably there has been no great teaching for which honest and well-intentioned people have argued, struggled, and sacrificed which has not had some real and important truth embodied in it. The difficulty and falsity, and the injury to the church and to religion have come when people have held their theory or doctrine to be the complete and only expression of truth in regard to the matter concerned. Various "saving truths" are held by various people, who think that no one can be saved except by believing these truths in the same way that they do. But when we consider that it is *sin* that we are to be saved from, and goodness that we are to be saved *to*, we are compelled to hold that anything that saves from sin, in any degree, or helps toward righteousness in any degree is a means of salvation. And we see that as a matter of fact many people profess and believe that they have the same faith, but the effect of this common faith upon their characters is very unequal and dissimilar in different cases. So we must say that any belief with regard to Jesus which helps a man to become better is valuable to that extent, and any way in which the life and words, death and resurrection of Jesus help any man toward right-

eousness is a way by which Jesus saves men from sin. But this salvation from sin must be held to mean the same thing as reconciling to God or making man at one with God, in the most important sense, if God is such a being as we believe him to be. We have pointed out the two principal ways in which the life of Jesus helps men to the life of love to God and man. If any other ways can be thought of which are not included in these two fundamental ones (and their effect upon society, and the prolongation and multiplication of their influence through the lives of those who have been influenced by them), they should be included in the doctrine of the "atonement," or the way in which Jesus brings man into harmony with God.

In section 54 we showed that we could not consider any belief with regard to Jesus as of any value apart from its effect upon character. We need here only to call attention to the fact that various theories of the atonement have been held in which Jesus is represented as doing something through which, or through belief in which, a man is saved quite apart from the influence of the belief upon the character, or even without any such influence. We have shown that such theories are without value. We believe, for this reason, that they are false, and in many cases we could point out direct injury which results from such faith. Indeed,

we may say that every theory that salvation comes in any other way than by the reformation of character, or that God requires a man to believe anything which will not affect his character favorably, is an immoral theory, misrepresenting God and misleading men.

Space will not permit us here to go adequately into the various theories which have been and are still held of the way in which Jesus reconciles us to God, or even of the meaning of New Testament passages bearing on the subject. But there is no doubt that later theories have been mistakenly read back into the New Testament. If the student will carefully consider what has been said in preceding sections about the ways in which Jesus by his life and death helps us to come to God for salvation and forgiveness, he will be able to interpret almost all, if not all, the New Testament passages in the light of these facts, and much more correctly than is done in many of the traditional interpretations. He will see that Jesus did suffer "vicariously" for our sins—that is, on account of his suffering we are enabled to escape consequences of our sins and sinfulness which we could not otherwise escape. He does reconcile us to God (not God to us—that is never suggested in the Bible), and his life is in a very true sense a ransom for ours. His blood cleanses us from sin. God is pleased with his perfect sacrifice, and imputes

to those who come to him in faith that he loves and forgives as Jesus did, and who earnestly desire to become like Jesus, the righteousness of Jesus. Careful thought will show how all of these expressions are justified and find their highest interpretation in those influences which we have seen to come from the life and death of Christ, and will bring great relief to those who have found at the same time help and comfort, and difficulty and perplexity in the traditional theories, which grew up after the atmosphere and many of the ideas which belonged to New Testament times were gone, and no longer understood.

As has already been pointed out, we must not say that Jesus is the only "way of salvation" or that no man can be saved except by some particular faith in, or relation to, him, if we use those words as they would ordinarily be understood. By holding such a doctrine we are in danger of making Jesus a hindrance to salvation instead of the mediator of salvation. He must not come *between* God and us so as to separate us from him. It is only when he brings us to God that he becomes in any literal sense our Savior, and it is God who finally saves us, by whatever means. If the words "No man cometh to the Father but by me" are rightly attributed to Jesus, we must interpret them, as we do his other words, in the light of his general teaching and his life, and hold that he meant that

the principles which he taught and according to which he lived were the only ones by which a man might come into harmony with God, and these principles were summed up in the one of loving, self-giving service to men. With this interpretation of his words we might hold that a man who had never heard of Jesus might still come to the Father "by him" if he lived the life of love to men; but we must recognize that this is a figurative and not a literal use of the expression. These words are, however, probably better understood as embodying the doctrine of the author that Jesus is the "Logos," the "Word," manifest in the flesh, but the same "Word" which "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." So understood, these words would mean, "No man cometh unto the Father except by accepting the revelation which, given to every man in some degree, was peculiarly manifested in Jesus," and their truth would be evident.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT SHALL WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE LAST THINGS AND THE FUTURE LIFE?

"He is not the God of the dead, but of the living."—Mark 12:27*a*.

63. The teachings of the Bible with regard to future events are valuable as the expression of the gradually developing faith of the people among whom and by whom its books were written, but not as giving us accurate information or final doctrine with regard to them.—This position should be clear from the discussion of the Bible and its uses and claims in chapters ii and iii, but it may be well to consider the particular application of the principles explained there to the subject now to be considered. Bible scholars are practically unanimous in recognizing progress in the attainment of religious faith, expressed in the books of the Bible. It is agreed that the early Hebrews had no such faith with regard to the future life as was later developed, that they thought of God's relations with men as practically confined to the earthly life, and that all men, good and bad, went at death to "Sheol," a place of shadowy and undesirable existence, of which little definite was known or thought. This word "Sheol" and the Greek word "Hades" which

corresponds to it, have both been translated "hell" in our "authorized version" and been taken to mean a place of eternal torment, prepared for devils and wicked men. It is clear that this was an incorrect rendering of these terms.

At the time of Jesus' life, a doctrine of resurrection and immortality was known among the Jews, which forms the atmosphere of the thought on these subjects in the New Testament. The resurrection for which the Pharisees hoped, however, was one confined to good Jews, and it was to be an earthly one, to occur at the time when the Messiah would appear and establish his kingdom, and for the purpose of enabling the faithful of past ages to participate in the glory of the Messiah's reign.

The Book of Revelation, which in its closing chapters gives some beautiful pictures of the glories of the future kingdom of God, does not profess to give a description of a heaven above the earth to which good people are to go at death or after the judgment, as it has generally been understood, but to describe the supernatural city of Jerusalem, which is to come down from heaven, and take the place of the earthly city of that name. In order to understand this book and the thought presented in it, much of which was familiar to the Jews at the time of Jesus and to Jesus himself, we need to know that this book and the Book of Daniel are

only two of a considerable number of apocalypses known at this time, and similar in thought and style. The Ethiopic Book of Enoch, the Secrets of Enoch, the Assumption of Moses, the Ascension of Isaiah, the Apocalypse of Ezra, and the Apocalypse of Baruch are some of these other "Revelations" full of curious imagery and visions of the future. They constituted the literary expression of the confidence of that time that God's judgment on the wicked and deliverance of his people from all their troubles were certain.

In view of the nature of these books and of their influence on the New Testament writers and thinkers and the people of Jesus' time, in view of the general attitude which we have seen must be taken toward the Bible, and finally in view of the fact that the humanity of Jesus limited his knowledge of the future as that of other men, and the beliefs of the people whom he was teaching were necessarily assumed in the form of his teaching except where he found it necessary to correct them, we must say that we can expect no definite and detailed information in the New Testament, even in the words attributed to Jesus, of the events and conditions of the future, and must put all expressions bearing on this subject to the test which we have found necessary as the test of all religious faith. The teachings of Jesus about the future must have an especial value for us as com-

ing from the one who uniquely manifested God's character on earth, who had the strongest faith in God and the most vivid perception of the natural results of sin, and the things to be expected from a loving and righteous heavenly Father. That the words of Jesus on this subject, and still more, the *record* of those words, given us from memory, and written probably several years at least after they were spoken, should bear the form and color of the ideas current at the time would be inevitable. So far as the teaching of Jesus differed from the faith common among the people where he was, we must hold that it was derived from, and based on, the firm conviction of the love and power of the heavenly Father, and thus it will have great value for us, whose faith must be derived and based in the same way.

64. We should believe that the personal existence of those who have been striving for righteousness in the earthly life will be continued after the death of the body and forever afterward.—We know that the visible, tangible human body disintegrates after death, and its dust is often scattered to the winds or waters, or taken up into the life of vegetation. It is of no value to believe that the particular atoms of matter which compose the body at the moment when it dies shall be gathered together, restored to their former shape, and revitalized at some future time. But it is

of great value to believe that in some form we shall continue to exist, to think and love, remember and act, to be able to recognize friends, to enjoy beautiful things. And we have no sufficient reason for denying that this will be the case for those who have come into harmony with the Power that governs the universe—who have been yielding themselves to the control of the Spirit of God. So far as experience goes, the evidence is at best negative. We have not yet sufficient evidence to say that we know that human life continues after the death of the body, although the psychic phenomena which point to such a continued existence are many and are being carefully investigated by some of the great scientists. It is conceivable that within a century or less we may have conclusive evidence that the soul or spiritual nature of man continues to exist after the body's decay. At any rate, no one can bring evidence to the contrary. The strongest reason for doubting this, so far as science is concerned, is the very close relation which we know to exist between our mental nature, thoughts, feelings, etc., and our physical constitution, brain, and nervous system. But, as Professor James has suggested, it may well be that the nervous system is more like a great window of colored glass which lets only a part of the outer light into the temple, than like the lamp which is the source of the light which illumines it,

and that when our minds shall be freed from the limitations of the nervous system, they will be far more active and powerful than they are now, instead of being destroyed. In any case, there is such an utter difference between thought and brain, between emotion and nerve-currents, that we cannot hold the destruction of the sensorium to prove the annihilation of the personality.

Everyone will easily recognize the fact that it would be a great encouragement to one who was sacrificing opportunities of pleasure, putting forth great effort, and perhaps wearing out or even destroying (as in martyrdom) the body, for the sake of the development of the highest character, and the showing of the truest faith in God and love for man, to believe that all that had been attained in this struggle would be preserved; that instead of the human organism which decayed, a still better vehicle for the impression and expression of the character would be supplied. It is certain, then, that the faith in immortality for those who were good, or becoming good, would have a good effect upon character.

This faith, however, is indissolubly connected with our faith in God. If, as we believe, mankind has been created by a Being with the character which Jesus showed, and with this fundamental purpose in view, that beings might be developed who should freely love God and each other, and

gain characters like that of God, then it is inconceivable that God would permit those who have been gaining such characters by the help of his Spirit to die utterly. It is inconceivable that such a God should have permitted Jesus to live and die as he did, if his death was the end of his existence; and also that if Jesus continues to live, those whom he loves, and who love him on earth, shall fail of opportunity to live on and become more like him, after the brief course of earthly life is completed. The fundamental argument of Jesus for the truth of the resurrection was the power of God—"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living"—that is, those whom he loves, and who love him cannot die. Even Socrates, more than four hundred years before Christ, said, "The gods cannot neglect the affairs of the righteous man," and expected immediately after his death to be with the happy spirits. Kant showed that we require belief in immortality in order to justify us in obeying our consciences. The value of this belief, then, must be admitted by all who find any value in life at all.

65. We should believe that if there be any person who becomes utterly bad, or so hopelessly bad that there is no possibility of his repenting and becoming righteous, his life will cease at the death of the body, or at some time afterward, when the evil nature of his character is consummated.—There are, in our experience, some reasons for

thinking that some people refuse the good and choose the evil so often that their characters become in time quite insensitive to every higher motive and divine influence, that they destroy entirely their ability to distinguish between right and wrong—the "sin against the Holy Spirit" or "unpardonable sin" against which Jesus so solemnly warned those who attributed his works of love to the spirit of evil. But we know so little of the power of God, and of the conditions of the future life, that we cannot say positively that there is any human being whom God's love will ultimately fail to reach and win. We may hope that he will accomplish this purpose of salvation in the case of everyone, but we cannot be sure. From the loving, righteous character of God, however, we may be very confident that he will take no pleasure in the suffering of anyone whom he has created, nor allow anyone to suffer except in so far as the suffering aids in the accomplishment of his purpose of salvation. We cannot conceive that it would be of any value to other men to have the absolutely bad tormented forever and ever, or even continue to exist at all, nor can we imagine that this would be of any value to God. On the other hand, we must hold that such eternal torment is absolutely contrary to the nature of a God who is loving, as well as just and righteous.

It is a still more cruel and degrading conception of God to hold that he will torture people forever and ever because they fail to believe certain doctrines of which they may or may not have heard, but which, in any case, were not presented to them in such a way as to make their acceptance either absolutely unavoidable, or else a final test of character, so that none could reject them except those who rejected everything good. In the past, when the conception of God centered in the thought of his majesty and might, and when there was no question about his revelation of himself and his will, and it was thought that the least sin, because it was against an infinite God, constituted an infinite insult to, or crime against, the majesty of God, which deserved an infinite punishment, it was possible for good people to believe in the eternal torment of both wicked and "unbelievers." But for those who accept the teachings of Jesus about God as the loving, heavenly Father of *all* men, it becomes a very serious contradiction in faith to believe such a doctrine, and all such would abandon it if they did not think that the teaching of the Bible required them to believe it. It seems to us that the Bible teaching on the subject is capable of a very different interpretation, and, in any case, we must rather believe that God is the greatest and the best possible Being, and will act consistently with his character, than to

accept any contrary interpretation of Scripture about him.

66. We should believe that the life after death is somewhat similar to our earthly life, and that it commences at the point of development reached at death and makes progress from that point on.— The reasons which we have found for believing in the continuance of life after death require that this life should be somewhat similar to the earthly life. If righteous character is of value, we must suppose the character to continue. But this means that the reason and memory must continue, at least, and that there must be some experiences in the future life for which the present experiences form a preparation. The article of the Creed which maintains faith in "the resurrection of the body" signifies not so much the idea that the future life shall find expression in bodies formed of the same atoms as those which composed it at the time of death, as that we are to have a life just as real and full, at least, as the one which we know now, and to which the body with all its organs and senses is so necessary. So we should believe that we shall have powers of perception not less varied and valuable than the present senses of the body, and we cannot imagine such except in some real physical form, not altogether dissimilar to our present bodies. Paul's teaching about the future life was that it was to be in bodily

form, but in bodies different from, and superior to, those we know here. Our faith in God would require us to believe that the future life is in no way inferior to our present life, but rather in various ways superior. Of course we cannot describe those ways, since we have no experience of them.

As character, in our experience, is always developed by gradual stages, we have no right or reason to think that when the body decays we shall suddenly become perfect in character, or make any tremendous leap forward all at once. We may well think that in the future life some of the temptations of the present will be wanting, and that there will be, perhaps, a segregation, at least of those who are worst in character, so that conditions for becoming good will be more favorable in some respects. But it certainly is not the best form of life of which we can think, that there should be no further test of or development of character in the ages which we hope to live after this brief life is over. And so we cannot think that we either cease to grow, or attain completeness, at the hour of death. There is no reason why we should not expect to grow in knowledge and skill as well as character in the future life, as we do here, and to continue from the stage where we here leave off.

67. We should believe in both a heavenly state and place for those who love God and man, following this earthly life, but should not attempt to determine either the conditions or the location of this life definitely.—The earlier pictures of heaven were of a place of delight to the senses, where everything was beautiful, golden, crystal, and where everything which could please the senses abounded—splendor, music, fruits of all kinds, etc. And in the days before the revolution of the earth on its axis, and the form and conditions of the stars and planets, were understood, it was thought that this beautiful heaven was to be found somewhere in the sky above us, among or beyond the stars. Knowledge of astronomy, leading to the conclusion that the "sky above us" is really the space about the earth in every direction, compelled the abandonment of the idea that we could tell definitely just where "heaven" is. It is nevertheless true that the only existence of which we know or which we can imagine is existence in space, and in some particular part of space. If, then, we believe that good people continue to live and to associate with one another, we must think of this as taking place in some particular location or locations, but whether this shall be on earth or in the air, or on some planet or star, we have no reason for guessing. It may be that we shall be free to roam through the uttermost regions of the uni-

verse, but even then we should not want to be quite homeless and with no place in which to expect to find our friends. It is helpful, then, to continue to use the word heaven to indicate the place in which the good shall meet each other in the future life.

But it has also become apparent, from our experience, that no outward surroundings can fully determine our mental conditions, either of happiness or of misery; and so it is evident that the most important meaning of the term heaven is that of a happy condition of spirit, with the opportunities for enjoying friendship and expressing love continued and improved. Our own characters, then, and those of the people with whom we associate, will be the most important conditions of future happiness, and we may expect the outward surroundings to be suitable to the inner, and both to be better than we can imagine here. Browning's lines:

> All we have ever hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist,
> Not its semblance, but itself,

are the expression of the highest faith in God and for man.

68. We should believe that God is constantly judging us according to our character and motives, but not that there will be any set time, as, for example, the hour of death, for the judgment of the individual, or a specific judgment day for the judgment of all who live and have lived, or of the nations.—If, as we believe, God knows all about us,

our past lives, our thoughts, and our motives, then he is constantly judging us, and giving us, not so much what we deserve as what is best for us, in view of his infinite love and knowledge of our needs. As people die at all stages of the development of character—when it is just beginning as well as when it seems to have taken permanent form, to have crystallized or hardened—we cannot think that a righteous God would make the eternal condition of happiness or misery dependent on the stage which a person had reached at death. We may well say that the whole future life is to some extent determined by the state which we have reached at any particular time, as it cannot be uninfluenced by it, and must always go on from what has been gained at any time; but as we have seen that we must believe in development after death as well as before, there seems to be no sufficient reason for holding that the moment of transition from the bodily life to what may lie beyond should be of such terrible significance. Apart from the better ideas of God's ways of dealing with men and determining their destinies, it is contrary to our conception of justice to think that the events of human life, or perhaps of only the last few minutes of it, should determine for any man either an eternity of unblemished bliss or one of unmitigated suffering and horror. That faith in God which says that such a judgment is

inconceivable is far truer than that which believes that it will come because some metaphorical writings which *men* have imagined to literally reveal God's will without error seem to teach such a thing.

As individuals are constantly being judged and rewarded or punished according to their deeds, so, in a true sense, are nations also. The nation in which principles of selfishness, luxury, vice, and cruelty prevail is already judged and being punished by decay of health and character. The nation in which the principles of altruism, righteousness, and purity prevail is also judged and is being rewarded by increase of power and prosperity. Probably the principal meaning, and certainly the whole value of the biblical pictures of judgment scenes consist in this truth that individuals and nations will all be judged according to their lives, by the highest principles of action. And the real meaning of the doctrine that Jesus will be the judge of the whole earth is that the whole earth is constantly being judged and approved or condemned by the moral principles which Jesus showed in his life.

It should be noted that when we speak of national sin, guilt, and punishment we are using a very convenient figure of speech, which, however, must not be taken literally, or we shall come into difficulty and confusion. Only individuals

can sin or be guilty or be punished. "National sin" is sin which is common or prevailing in a nation, among the individuals which compose it, or wrong which is regarded as done by the nation in its corporate capacity, as by the government or army. The fact that each individual of a nation, and especially many innocent individual members of it, may suffer on account of such "national sins" has led to a too literal application of the terms guilt, punishment, etc., to such common or prevailing sins. The deeper problems involved are considered in the general problem of evil and its meaning. (See section 38.) Here we are only considering what meaning there is in the idea of national judgment.

The only imaginable value of a *literal* fulfilment of the visions of future judgment scenes would be to impress the justice or power of God on some onlooker, since God requires no such circumstances to determine the guilt or innocence of anyone; and to think of God as doing his judging and sentencing in the same way that men do, only on a larger scale, is to make his judgment an unspiritual and artificial thing, and to think of him as being under limitations like those of human judges and kings. And as there would be no indifferent onlookers in such a final judgment of the earth as that imagined, there is no conceivable value in thinking that such a spiritual vision will

be literally fulfilled; and on the other hand, it is contrary both to the laws of space and time under which we live, and to the ways in which we know God to deal with men and nations.

69. We should believe that the lives of men, both as individuals and as masses or society, will constantly improve under the influence of God's Spirit working upon and through the lives of men, on earth, but not that there will be any sudden and supernatural events which will change the influence of God upon society from its spiritual form to that of force.—A careful consideration of God's ways of making men good and bringing them into submission to his will, into the fellowship of his love, will show that they are fundamentally spiritual or ethical. It is true that God constantly rewards virtue of certain sorts with physical comfort or pleasure and punishes sins of certain sorts with physical pain; but it is to be noted that a person might abstain from the vices which bring physical disease and pain and live the life tending to physical health and pleasure, from motives of pure selfishness and without developing a good character at all. It is the voluntary obedience to the voice within, irrespective of outward consequences, the choosing of the higher motives because they are higher, and not from any other compulsion, the yielding to the attraction of the righteous and loving person, not because of some reward or

punishment of a physical sort that is expected or feared, which develops true character. Jesus refused to convince his hearers of his divine authority by wonderful deeds, because the only real ground of his authority was the righteousness and truth of what he taught and enjoined, and that authority appealed directly to the reason and conscience of those who listened to him. The obedience which follows only upon physical compulsion of some sort has no element of real righteousness in it and develops no valuable character.

These considerations lead us to the conclusion that the ways in which God has hitherto taught men and helped them to become good will never be superseded, as they are the best, and indeed the only imaginable ways in which the kind of life which God desires could be developed. We must therefore conclude that the apocalyptic pictures of a millennium in which all evil will be forcibly removed and subdued, and good will reign by force and not by the free acceptance by men of the principles of goodness, belong to an age when God's ways were not clearly understood and, as literal prophecies of the future, must be abandoned by those who have received God's fuller revelation. If, as some Christian people hold, particularly because they think the Bible teaches it, the world is growing continually worse, then it is evident

that the work of Jesus and the Spirit of God is unsuccessful in the world; that the kingdom of God is not coming and spreading as yeast in the meal, or as seed growing in the ground, but is being more and more defeated; and that the methods which God has been using to bring the world to himself are not adapted to the most of mankind. But this is really to give up our faith in a Christlike God. For the methods which Christ used and set in motion for the salvation of society were moral and spiritual, and if God is like Jesus we must think that he would certainly make use of the most effective methods of saving the world, and would also use the methods which Jesus used. To hold that the kingdom of God could be established only by supernatural and non-ethical, non-moral means is to deny the teaching of Jesus and the value of his life and work. To hold that the world is constantly growing worse, in spite of the influence of the Holy Spirit and the efforts of the disciples of Christ and the children of God, is to take a most discouraging view of the power of God and of Christianity, and of the value of missionary and general efforts for the improvement of society in all ways. It tends to make people regard all efforts for the bettering of social conditions, and improvement of the general standards of morality as useless, and has kept many people from co-operating in such work.

Besides, this view ignores the plain facts of history. It is only the most prejudiced who can fail to see that there has been great progress and improvement in the conditions of mankind, not only materially, but also morally and spiritually, since the time of Christ; and although doubtless "evil men and seducers" are waxing worse and worse, yet the masses of men are becoming better and the possibility of living human life according to Christian principles is yearly becoming greater and clearer. There has probably been no decade since the time of the apostles when Christians have not seen the signs of the "last days" in the events about them, "wars and rumors of wars," calamities, and impostors of all sorts, and what was taken for apostasy and the teaching of the "anti-Christ." But the looked-for supernatural events of the return of Jesus literally in the clouds and glory, and the establishment of his reign on earth in outward visible form, have not yet come. The failure of the prophecies of those who thought it of more importance to calculate from the obscure language of Daniel and Revelation, as to just when these supernatural events should come, and to prepare their "ascension robes," rather than to help make the Spirit of God, the spirit of loving service, regnant in all the affairs of human life, has shown how they have misunderstood the gospel and its fundamental principles.

We need not concern ourselves with the final end of human life upon the earth. Probably life on the earth will at some time come to an end, although that may well be millions of years hence, but when it comes, it will doubtless come in the way that God sees best, and probably in a "natural" way, as God probably does everything in natural ways, if we could only fully understand them. But however it may be, it will at worst be but a changing from the earthly life to the later form of life in a sudden way, earlier for some people than would perhaps naturally be expected; and it would be nothing more to be feared than the familiar forms of death which surround us. If God revealed his very nature in Christ, then the one who has the Christian faith has nothing to fear but everything to hope for, in the future. The Christian faith is the purest and most concrete form of optimism.

CHAPTER VIII

HOW SHALL WE CULTIVATE AND EXPRESS THE BEST FAITH?

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" —Rom. 10:14, 15*a*.

70. As the primary test of the best faith is the kind of character or life which it will produce, so the absolutely essential expression of the best faith is the life of loving service to men.—There are two dangers with regard to religious faith. The first is that a man may profess to believe something and even fancy he does believe it, when it really is little more than a form of words to him, and if you should make a plain application of his professed faith to his life, at some sensitive point, he would, if honest, acknowledge that he did not believe what he had thought he did. But the other danger, which is probably the more common one, is that a man should honestly believe some religious principle but have it so seldom in his mind and think so little about it that his life would show few or no results from it, or, in other words, that he should hold his faith only part of the time instead of all the time.

So far as our actions are voluntary, they are determined by the thoughts and emotions that are in our minds when we act. A man strikes his wife because he is angry with her. He may at other times love his wife—at such times he could not strike her. At one time the only thought in his mind is of something displeasing to him about his wife's words or actions. Then he is angry and strikes. If at that moment his mind had been filled with thoughts of all the good things his wife had done, it would have been quite impossible for him to strike her. Thus one's action is determined by the thought or the faith that he has at the time of action.

As the idea has been so prevalent that when we have the right religious faith we are in some way *safe*, have some great advantage from it, we need to keep continually reminding ourselves that our faith is worth nothing except as it affects our life, and thus to be continually testing our faith by its fruits in life.

As we have seen, the only life that would naturally spring or could possibly flow from the best faith is that which has for its determining motive love for God and men. But the love for men is the easier to test, and is even more essential than love for God as an evidence of a right development of character. For a man may honestly doubt whether there be a Christlike God, and

therefore be unable truly to say he loves God, but no one who has learned to think rightly can doubt his duty to love and serve his fellow-men. If God be what Christians believe him to be, it would be impossible for a man to love him without loving his fellows, since love to men is the will and command of God, and the nature which would love God truly must be one which would love man truly. So we may be sure that one who does not love his fellows does not truly love God. But the converse is not true. One may love his fellow-men while, for a time, unable to believe in God. However, in this case the man has the character which *would* love God, and will, as soon as, through intellectual enlightenment, belief in God becomes possible. The life of love to men is therefore the necessary and only positive evidence of a saving faith.

71. As the central principle of the best faith is belief in a Christlike God, its most direct expression will be in the form of personal communion or prayer.—In comparing this thesis with the last one, we note that the central principle is a different thing from the "primary test," and that the most direct expression is not the same as its "absolutely essential expression." If Jesus were with us today, and we really loved him, the most natural and direct expression of that love would be in our entering into personal touch and fellowship with

him, if that were possible. And if we realized our need of health of soul or of body for ourselves or for our friends, and believed that he could give what was needed, it would be most natural that we should go to him and ask him for what we wanted. If, then, we really believe that God is in character like Jesus, and that we can speak to him, and have a real fellowship with him, even though he does not answer us in just the way other personal beings—those with bodies and mouths—do, and that he can give us and our friends the things which we need, it is most natural that we should seek for such fellowship and bring to him our requests. If we fail to do this, it must be because we doubt either the possibility or the value of such fellowship or favor.

The principal value of prayer is to be found in the fellowship with God which it promotes, and which can be promoted in no other way so well. We shall consider in succeeding sections the subject of requests made in prayer, and reasons for expecting them to be granted. But since God loves us and knows our needs and desires without our expressing them to him in definite form, we shall not find the bringing of requests to God for the sake of getting favors, which we could not expect otherwise, the most important element in prayer. Many of the blessings thus asked for and granted would come to us if we did not ask for them, but

in that case they would not promote in us the feeling of personal relationship between God and us which is of the highest value for the development of our faith and religious life. This sense of fellowship is to be promoted by the expression of adoration, praise, thanksgiving, and the confession of sin, as well as the asking for blessings which we need; and particularly the greatest and most important ones, which we are surest that it is in accordance with God's will to grant—namely, those that concern the spiritual life most directly. And the answers to such prayers are to be found, not, for the most part, in mystical experiences or unusual or supernatural events, but in those familiar experiences which we have learned to know as the only sure tokens of God's dealings with us—namely, the arising of good thoughts, the development of high motives, the increasing of our love for all that is good, and the strengthening of our faith in God. These experiences seem to us so common and so natural that we often fail to recognize them as messages and blessings from God of the greatest value. Their value for us would be much greater if we did receive them as answers to our prayers, and as that reciprocation on God's part of our expressions of love to, and fellowship with, him.

It should be carefully noted that nothing else can take the place of prayer in thus promoting the

sense of personal relationship with God. It is very true, from one point of view, that—

> Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
> Uttered or *unexpressed*,

since God knows our desires and will grant them if they are for things which are really good for us, whether we formulate them in definite prayer or not. But if I fail to spend some time in definite, *expressed* prayer, and consider the having of good thoughts and desires sufficient, I shall certainly not strengthen but rather weaken my faith in God as a personal friend, whose fellowship I desire to cultivate as the greatest joy and privilege; and thus my religion is likely to decay and not to grow, for life and growth depend upon exercise and expression and will certainly cease without it.

72. Since prayer to God presupposes true faith in God, including the belief that God wills everything that is best for men, everyone who prays should believe that his prayers are heard and answered in the highest and best way possible.—Strength of faith is often considered to be the chief requisite to prevailing prayer, but it is likely that truth of faith is at least as important. That is, in order to pray effectually and helpfully, we must realize the character of God to whom we pray, and our prayers must be suited to such a Person as the one to whom they are directed. Now, as we have seen, we should believe that God's action in the

universe is fundamentally determined by his loving character, and his action in relation to men must be thought of as completely determined by his desire for their highest good. Further, we must believe that God knows just what is for the highest good of men as no man can know it either for himself or for others. Hence we must believe, constantly, that all the events in the world for which God is responsible are the best that could possibly happen to men in view of all the conditions and circumstances. When we pray, therefore, we must always pray "Thy will be done," and desire, above all and including all, that God's will for men should be accomplished. Our particular requests, therefore, must always have this provision expressed or understood: "If it be best," or "If it be according to Thy will." And then, since God is sure to do what is best, in so far as that is possible, we must regard the things which actually happen (in so far as they are God's action) as the best that could happen, and believe that our prayers are answered and our requests in their real intention granted. Thus we, if we have the right faith in God, should never speak of unanswered prayers. All of our prayers are answered, and our requests are granted if they are best and possible; and if they are not best, we would not want them; if they are not possible, we cannot expect them to be granted.

73. We should understand that God's power is limited in certain ways and should not ask God to do what we have good reason to believe he could not do.—Although we speak of God as almighty, that attribute is not to be taken to mean that he can do everything which can be imagined. It means rather that God can do whatever can be done which is in accordance with his character and will. We must therefore recognize some limitations which belong even to God's action, and recognize, too, that there may be others of which we do not know.

God is limited by reality or fact—he cannot make that which has happened not to have happened. He may have many ways which we cannot imagine of changing the expected course of events, so that our prayers with regard to the future might be granted, even though the forces which we know to be in operation would (without the modifying effect of some other force, which perhaps does not come into operation until we pray) bring about a contrary result. But we have no right to ask him to do anything which would clearly involve the contradiction or reversal of what has actually occurred. He cannot change the fact that it has occurred.

God is also limited by his nature and will. He has instituted certain methods of creation and support of the universe as the best if not the only

possible ones. His methods are always consistent or uniform, not with the mechanical uniformity of a machine—at least not in all the departments of his activity—but with the consistency of the highest knowledge, wisdom, and justice, in which there can be no arbitrary action, but only that which follows from his loving and righteous character. We have come, in the last century, to see that God's ways in Nature are uniform; that he does nothing by magic, but all by what we call natural forces or means; that there is no such thing as a suspension of or interference with the forces of Nature, but that God always accomplishes his will in the physical universe by means of, and not in spite of, "natural forces." If he moves a ship, it is either by wind or tide or engine. If he makes or keeps a man alive, it is always by means of the beating of the heart, the circulation of the blood, the breathing of the lungs, and never without them.

In the realm of the spirit he also works in uniform ways. We have a much less complete understanding of the laws of the mind and spirit than of the ways of matter, but we can trace their working to some extent. God brings people to repentance and makes them good through thoughts which come to them from words that are spoken or read or experiences which happen in the daily life. Doubtless there are other and less explicable ways

in which he works upon the spirit, but we should not think that they are more divine because we cannot understand them. We should rather seek to understand them as fully as possible in order that we may come into the fullest harmony with them.

One of the ways in which God is limited, which concerns us most directly, is by the freedom which he has given to man to choose good or evil. We have considered the reasons for this freedom and its value for man. We cannot expect that God will violate this freedom in answer to our requests—that he will make us or others what we and they do not choose to be made. He may, in answer to prayer, bring certain special influences to bear to make a higher choice easier or more evidently better, but not in such a way as to take away the power to make or refuse it. Probably if we understood the reason for all the limitations of God's power, we should see that even these limitations were for our best good, and thus in accordance with the fundamental desire that the best—that is, God's will—should be done. But we shall pray better as we pray more intelligently, and it is well for us to understand, so far as possible, the ways in which God accomplishes his will, and to make our requests in harmony with these ways. Thus will our requests be more frequently and clearly granted and our faith thereby strengthened.

74. We should believe that prayer to God has a value for us and for the world which could not be gained in any other way, and should not hesitate to ask God to do anything which we believe may be according to his will.—If, as we have seen, God is ready to do everything that is for the highest welfare of men, whether we pray to him or not, and knows the needs of men without our telling him, the question naturally occurs: Why should we then ask anything of God? What difference can it make whether we ask or not? We offer two answers to this question. In the first place, we may believe, although we cannot, perhaps, be sure, that a prayer which is the expression of an earnest desire may be a real force which is in this way placed at God's disposal, to accomplish the thing asked for. As we know that there are many things which God does only through men—through the influence of human personality—we may say that, since that is the best way, therefore it is the only way in which God could accomplish certain things, since he must do them in the way he knows to be best. Of course if the result of our prayer is to make us willing and ready to go and do the thing we have prayed might be done, our prayer has enabled God to answer it as he might not otherwise have been able. But we are only beginning to find out the laws of thought, and it is possible that an earnest prayer, even when it makes no difference

in what we are able to do toward its fulfilment, may yet be a force which will affect other minds far away, in ways that we do not yet understand, and perhaps may never understand—a force thus placed at God's disposal and which he is able to use to accomplish his will as he uses the forces of Nature.

But another difference which prayer makes in the situation, which we may all be sure about, is that it may change those who pray, and thus make it possible for God to give to them what, without their prayer, would not be good for them, and to do through them what, without the preparation of spirit which results from earnest desire and faithful communion with God, he could not do. It must thus be clear to every thoughtful person that earnest prayer for spiritual blessings must at least result in blessing to the one who prays, and make him more able to help others. The effect of prayer, then, is not to change God, but to change the one who prays so that God can do for him and through him what otherwise would not be done.

We must say a word in answer to the question, "Is it possible to think that a God whose power is shown in and through Nature, and never in opposition to, or interference with, it, and whose action always follows regular principles or laws, can nevertheless in some way manipulate the forces of Nature and of mind so as to accomplish results in

a personal rather than a mechanical way, and do things in answer to requests, which are not merely the psychological effect of the prayer upon the one who prays, and which yet would not have occurred without the prayer?" Our answer will be twofold. First, we certainly cannot give a positive No to the question about God's real, personal use of physical nature to accomplish special purposes. We may not be able to understand how he could do so, and yet there are so many events in physical nature which have actually occurred after special prayer, and which seemed most improbable, when the prayer was offered, that it would be difficult and unscientific to maintain positively that they were all mere coincidences. And further, the realm of mind is so different from that of matter that it seems still more probable that God's thought may act directly on the minds of men, and thus prompt them to do things which they otherwise would not do. We should notice, on reflection, that a very large proportion of our prayers for things which were not primarily "spiritual benefits" might be answered if our prayers should result in thoughts being put into the minds of those who otherwise would not have them.

Our second answer to this question is that prayer would be eminently worth while, even were its results no other than those which we are sure do, and must, naturally follow it, for they are results

of the highest importance and could probably be reached in no other way.

Finally, as a volume could not say all that might well be said on this subject, we must conclude this discussion with the principle that the natural expression of faith in a heavenly Father is prayer, and we should not let our ignorance as to how he might be able to grant requests hinder us from making them, unless we are quite sure that from their nature they are requests which he cannot grant. The greatest blessings which we can desire from God are those which strengthen and purify the character, and these are the ones which we are sure would be according to his will, and for which we have the clearest evidence that they are given in answer to prayer.

75. **We should acquire and strengthen the thoughts and feelings belonging to the best faith by the constant use of the Bible and of such other literature as is most helpful to this end.**—We need not here repeat what has been said about the value and use of the Bible in chapters ii and iii. But we need to call attention to the fact already noticed, that, in order to make religious faith effective in life, we must be *constantly* thinking of the different elements of our faith and how they would apply to the various problems of our life. For this purpose experience shows us that no other book compares with the Bible in value, for a large part of it is

concerned with relating how the highest faith has determined life under various circumstances and thus it will suggest to the man with an open mind and sensitive heart how he should apply his faith to the ever-changing circumstances of his life.

We have no right, however, to confine our time to the Bible when there are other books which meet needs not completely met in the Bible. The most direct message from God to the people of any time is that which comes in the language of that time and is applied specifically to the conditions of that time, and we must hear God's voice just as clearly in the messages of the prophets of today as in those of past centuries.

76. We should regularly unite in public worship with some part of the organized church, thus recognizing and expressing the social nature of our faith and receiving the advantages made possible by the common worship of those who have a common faith.—True religion involves recognition of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of all men. It is therefore very important that this principle of brotherhood should be recognized most clearly in our worship, in which we express our highest thoughts and feelings about God and to God. We must take every means of uniting the law of love to God with that of love to men in order to have a complete religion. The expression of our faith in, and love for, God and men should thus be

made in company with others who have the same faith and love, that each may be encouraged and inspired by the sympathy and co-operation of the rest, and that the unity of Christians which is believed in may thus be *visibly* set forth. Where "two or three" are met together in the name of Jesus, his spirit is present with them. It is just as truly present where one alone worships God, but the presence of another with the same purpose and faith makes the feeling of his presence stronger. Where it is a struggle to hold a faith or stand for a principle, everyone who stands with me helps to confirm my faith and make my struggle for righteousness more effectual. We must therefore regard the "assembling of themselves together" of those who have a common faith and purpose, for common worship, of very great importance from this standpoint alone, even if there were no other advantage: that thus they show themselves in sympathy with each other and are united in their outward expression of the thoughts and feelings which make them one in spirit. In the church, then, it should be true that "the rich and the poor meet together"; that all classes unite themselves in sympathetic voicing of their belief in, and thanksgiving to, the God who is no respecter of persons.

Besides the great value of the public recognition of social fellowship with others, the actual forms

and instruments of public worship have great value in promoting feelings of adoration and love to God and sympathy with men. The sound of many voices united in reading the words of Scripture or offering prayer or singing praise, with what assistance may be added by choir and organ, should do much toward arousing our deepest and best emotions, and affect us in ways in which we cannot be affected by our private or family worship. These latter are of the highest importance, but they do not give us all we need. Those who have charge of public worship should do everything possible to make it inspiring and uplifting, and those who come to enjoy it should also take their share in it, so that the value which should belong to it shall really be gained. We should abandon the idea of coming to church just for the sake of something new or entertaining in either sermon or music. The primary function of church "services" is the common expression of worship, and this should be at least one of the governing motives for our regular attendance on them. It would be very easy for any intelligent man to find sermons which he might read at home, which will be better than the average to be heard at church; and in many homes, as well as in other places outside the church, music of a greater artistic value may be heard and rendered than will be found in most churches. But none of

these things can take the place of sincere public worship.

We have spoken of the "organized" church. This does not refer to any particular form of organization. It should be apparent, however, that, in order to have regular and helpful gatherings for public worship, some form of organization must and will inevitably arise, and the practical question is only how we may find the most helpful form for such organization. All attempts to avoid "sectarianism" and "formalism" by withdrawing from the organizations of believers already in existence result in the arising of new sects and new forms. We have no acquaintance with any life without organs—some real form of organization, by whatever name it may be called—and religious life is no exception to this rule. Without some form of organization, however loose, no men will do anything together or work in harmony. The problem is, as we have said, to find the form of organization which will best suit the purpose in view, and then to have such life within the forms of organization as will make each organ do its part in the best way.

77. **We should receive for ourselves and help to give to everyone else the best possible instruction in the principles of the best religious faith, through the organized church.**—It is possible that the time may come again, as it has been in the past, when there shall be such a general agreement as to the

principles of the best religious faith, the highest form of religion, in given communities, that instruction in the fundamental teachings of religion may be given by competent teachers in the common schools, where the so-called secular branches of knowledge are taught. That time is probably to be desired, but by no means to be forced, and when it comes, the teachers of religious truth must not be limited to the expression of any exactly formulated views, but must be as free to teach what they believe to be the truth as teachers in other departments are to teach what they believe to be true. Doubtless textbooks and "authorities" will be used, but as guides and assistants rather than ultimate canons which are not to be questioned in any way.

But until in any given community there shall be practical unanimity of opinion in regard to the general principles of religion and the wisdom of such teaching of all pupils together, the organized church must bear the responsibility for specifically religious instruction. The foregoing pages, we hope, have made clear the importance of having the right ideas with regard to God and his relations to man, and it should be evident that people will not come to these ideas spontaneously and without study and instruction. The highest religious truths which we know have come to us as the result of thousands of years of progressive revela-

tion by God, and study, meditation, discussion, and experiment on man's part; and it is just as important that the valuable results of past ages of toil in the realm of religious thought should be preserved and handed down to the future generations, as that the knowledge of any other sciences should be thus preserved and transmitted.

It is of the first importance, then, that the different organized churches should each take its share in solving the tremendous problem of giving to each child proper instruction in the highest subjects, religion and morals, while the state arranges for instruction in the less important branches in which there is little difference of opinion about what should be taught.

The sermon in the church should have constantly something of the element of instruction in it, although its principal function is inspiration, the confirming of faith, and the assisting of worship. The Sunday school is at present the best instrument of instruction which the church has, although it is yet exceedingly inadequate for its task and needs to be improved and supplemented. But the realization of the responsibility and necessity of this work must be more general and deep before it will be properly done. Let all Christians unite to see that this duty of instruction is fulfilled in the future as it never has been in the past, as a work of the highest social and religious importance.

78. We should take our share in the work of the church to promote the strongest love in all men for one another and to encourage all true forms of social service.—The doctrine of the brotherhood of all men has spread from the Christian church into various organizations and groups of society not directly connected with the church. This is a hopeful sign of the times and yet its value may be overestimated. It should be recognized that the idea of universal brotherhood has no great depth or significance to it until it has become a fundamental principle of life, or in other words a matter of *religious faith*. It must be related to the "world-view" and applied so as to determine the aims, activities, and relations of life. When the brotherhood of man is given such a place in life it must be one of the two fundamental principles of the best faith, and with the other principle of belief in the fatherhood of God must yield, when it is thoroughly applied to all the conditions of life, an ideal state of society, the "kingdom of God."

Neither in history nor in theory can be found a higher and better way of making the thought of the brotherhood of man a real and determining element in the organization of human life than by giving it its place with faith in the heavenly Father. The implanting of this twofold faith in all men is the highest and fundamental work of the church.

The cry is common today that we need "practical religion" and that organizations for social service, for caring for the sick, ignorant, poor, unfortunate, and delinquent, and improving in every way the social and political conditions, are showing this practical religion far more than the church is doing. This cry is a healthy reaction from the idea that religion has no concern for society or for the affairs of the earthly life, but almost if not quite exclusively for preparing the few who should accept the true religion for the life beyond the grave. Nevertheless this cry has gone to the other extreme and brought about a dangerous situation in society. It has forgotten that faith always goes before practice and that the life which involves self-sacrifice for the good of others will never be lived long without a strong religious faith as its basis. It has also failed to realize that although the churches *as organizations* are not directly conducting the larger part of these works of "practical religion" they would not be possible at all without the spirit, the money, and the labor of those who belong to the church or at least have grown up under its influence. These benevolent enterprises and works of social improvement cannot be maintained without much self-sacrifice; and it ought to be clear to everyone, in this age of selfishness, money-loving, and pleasure-seeking, that the spirit of self-sacrificing altruism will not spring up

spontaneously in every breast, but must be carefully propagated and instilled into the life-principles of the children and youth if it is not to die out, and civilization perish in its luxury and cruel selfishness.

It is, then, one of the first duties of every lover of mankind to take his share in the work of some religious organization to educate the coming generations and maintain so far as possible the present generation in the religious faith which shall keep alive and make universal the *spirit* of loving service to humanity, without which that service must soon die.

79. The primary work of the church as an organization is to maintain public worship and education in religion and morals, and it should undertake to organize and control particular forms of social improvement and service only when local circumstances make this advisable.—It has been well said that "sound administration is the only sound philanthropy: other philanthropies are only plasters on sores." It seems almost certain that when a fair approach is made to the best forms of social and political organization, carried out by, and applied among, people properly educated both intellectually and morally, there will be very little need of the many philanthropic enterprises which are now doing such a valuable and necessary work for even the most progressive and enlightened nations. When that time shall come, the influence

of the church will be not less but far greater than it is today. Its primary functions of maintaining religious worship and education will be just as necessary as ever, and they will be performed very much more thoroughly than now. But that time of ideal social organization is a good distance off still, although it seems to be approaching with very hopeful rapidity; and in the meanwhile there are many works for the promotion of social welfare which must be maintained by voluntary effort actuated by the Christian spirit. Many churches have done a great deal to improve social conditions in their parishes by so-called "institutional" methods. They have established gymnasiums, baths, reading-rooms, employment agencies, and other instrumentalities for meeting the special needs of the community, which were not otherwise met. Aside from the immediate value of these things to the community, they have had this great value, that they promoted in the church the feeling of responsibility for, and interest in, the rest of the community, and gave expression to the love for men which belonged to the religion; and they also proved to the community that the church was really interested in its highest welfare, and that its religion was thus genuine and valuable, and so attracted outsiders into the church and promoted the spirit of unselfishness in the community as a whole. There are and doubtless will for many years be many

communities where such institutional methods would be a great blessing to both church and neighborhood, and it is of the first importance that each church shall feel its responsibility to express its spirit of love, and in every possible way promote the best physical and moral conditions in the place where its work is carried on. Still the institutional church should not be regarded as the normal one. If the political, commercial, industrial, educational, and sanitary conditions are what the state or city should make them, extreme needs, the provision for which we have been describing, should not exist, and of course there are many places where they do not. And where they do exist, they may very often be much better met by organizations working independently of any particular church, but supported by the interest, labor, and money from various churches rather than by the efforts of the churches individually. The Young Men's Christian Association is an institution for social service carried on by no particular denomination, and generally no particular church in a given place, but supported by the churches, and doing a work which in many cases it would be foolish and wasteful for the church to try to duplicate. Movements for temperance, political and social reform, etc., will generally best be carried on by people in whom the church has implanted the highest moral principles, in organizations independent of the church, where,

if it were attempted to have such movements promoted by the church itself, disagreement and strife would arise among the church members, and hurt its influence. The primary functions of the church should therefore always be clearly kept in mind: to furnish the power, but not necessarily the machinery for social improvement. And the policy of a given church organization should be determined by the needs of the community, what seems to be the best way of meeting those needs, and the measure of unanimity with which the church could take up a particular work for the social improvement of the community.

80. The Holy Spirit is the only final authority for the church, and the form of organization of the church should be such as to promote the freest response to the guidance of God's Spirit.—We have already discussed the reasons why the Bible cannot be regarded as the absolute authority of the individual or the church. We shall hardly need argument to show that other teachings of men, whether of popes or councils, general assemblies, "fathers," or saints, reformers, philosophers, or theologians, cannot be regarded as of absolute authority if the Bible cannot, whether their views are formulated in creeds, catechisms, or confessions, loci, institutes, or decrees. Neither can we regard Christ as such an infallible authority, if that means that we are to accept the human and fallible

records of his words and deeds which have come down to us, as laws for our conduct and faith which are not to be examined, tested, or questioned. It should have become plain in our study that God is continually revealing himself and his truth to men, and that each generation and each man needs the direct guidance of God for itself and himself in order to have the best faith and live the highest life in the ever-varying conditions.

For each particular local church organization or congregation, there are two classes of problems in both of which the church should be guided by the Spirit of God. The first class includes questions as to what should be believed and taught, and the second as to what should be done, the forms of worship, of organization, and of the expression of the spirit of Christ in the congregation and community. With regard to both classes of problems there are two principles which must be most carefully guarded: the first, that of order, which would preserve what is good and helpful in past experience, and prevent arbitrary, ignorant, or careless innovation or confusion; and the second, that of free development and adaptation to ever-varying and changing conditions and increasing perception of truth. The former of these principles might be called conservative and the latter progressive. In the vast majority of churches, particularly in the more general forms of denomina-

tional organization, the conservative principle is often applied far too extremely, and almost to the exclusion of the principle of progress. The more centralized and powerful the denominational control is, the more difficult does progress become within the organization, so far as that involves change of any sort. The Roman Catholic church, with its hierarchy headed by the bishop of Rome, is a good illustration of this, but it will probably be found true in all forms of church organization. With regard to the application of these two principles of order and progress to the expression and teaching of the *faith* of the church, we shall speak more particularly in later sections, but will say here that where the individual congregation is a reasonably intelligent one, the utmost freedom which is at all consistent with common fellowship and co-operation should be allowed to it in both the formulation and the use of its articles of faith. It should have guidance from without but not compulsion.

This same rule of guidance from without but not compulsion might well be applied to the order and forms of worship and the laws according to which the other activities of the individual Christian congregations are carried on. Neither by rules or commands imposed upon it from without nor by laws incorporated in the trust deed of the church property or its constitution should the faith and

activity of the local church be so limited that after careful consideration and general agreement they could not be modified to suit changing needs and fresher revelation of truth—to embody the directions of God's Spirit in its life.

81. The form of organization of the church should be such as to promote the fullest fellowship and most effective co-operation between the different congregations and groups of Christian people.—There are great advantages to be gained by the local congregation from the wider view and knowledge and greater experience of those outside its immediate membership, and provision should be made for the fullest use of such advantages. The assisting of weaker congregations, establishing of churches where they are needed, evangelizing of non-Christian countries, and doing other works which belong to the church but cannot be well done by the individual congregations as such, must be provided for by the most effective possible relationship between the congregations.

No one can say just what the best way of combining the proper degree of autonomy of the local congregation with the most effective co-operation between different congregations will be. The Bible does not prescribe the polity of the church, and if it did its prescription would not necessarily be the word of God to this generation. The historical forms are not necessarily the best.

A great many abuses have come to us through history and have existed alongside of real effectiveness in work and advancement of civilization and religion. And indeed history shows us the greatest variety in the methods of conducting Christian worship and work, all of which were useful. We must say that inasmuch as the forms of civil government, the social atmosphere and ideals, the conditions of society in respect to education, industry, housing, and other interests of life exist in the greatest variety and are constantly changing, the most effective work of the church for humanity will require great elasticity and adaptability; and only experiment can determine what forms of worship and procedure are the best for given situations. As a matter of fact, among the Protestant churches in English-speaking countries there has been a marked movement on the part of those denominations having stronger central control toward greater freedom for the local congregation, and on the part of those denominations where each local congregation was theoretically completely autonomous, toward closer relations and more effective supervision by the larger organization. Thus the congregational churches (including Baptist, Disciples of Christ, and other denominations having congregational government) have been finding the local congregations too independent and isolated for the truest

fellowship and most effective co-operation, and the episcopal and presbyterian churches have found that more freedom must be given to the local congregation to adapt itself to its environment and follow the guidance of the Spirit, and these different forms of church polity have been thus approaching each other.

Finally, it should be said that the strong movement toward the reuniting of different sects or denominations of Christian churches, which is apparent and rapidly growing at the present time, is one of the most hopeful signs of the coming of the kingdom of God. The differences between their beliefs and methods are fast disappearing or at least diminishing under the influence of the higher and truer ideals, religious, moral, intellectual, and social. The loss to humanity arising from their continued separation and competition is incalculable. The waste of effort and of money involved, while great and shameful, is probably of much less importance than the confusion of thought and unsympathetic attitude of heart which this lack of unity among those who worship the same God and seek the same end causes. We believe that a careful and prayerful consideration of this principle of the guidance of the churches by the Spirit, and what it involves, must lead most directly to the church unity which is so desirable.

82. The qualifications for membership in the church should be such as to make it possible for everyone who holds its fundamental faith in a Christlike God and in the life of love to all men, and shows his faith by his life, to enjoy full fellowship in its worship and work.—When we consider the real meaning of the term "member" —a part of a living body, as an arm or a limb—we realize that the members of a church must be those who are moved by the Spirit which guides or should guide the church, and that all who are under the control of the Spirit which rules the church are thus properly its members, and no others. But we have seen that the various details of the best faith and principles of activity which belong to it are all derivable from these two fundamental attitudes of faith in a Christlike God—in the God who revealed himself in Jesus— and love for all men. Those who have and show in their lives this faith and love are united by bonds of sympathy and common purpose of far greater strength and significance than any of the customs or opinions which divide them, and they should learn to throw all their energy into the accomplishment of the great work which their faith gives to them, and waste none of it in perpetuating their differences by maintaining separate names and organizations.

It is well for denominations and individual congregations to formulate for themselves state-

ments of the different articles of their faith, from time to time, when this can be done in the spirit of love. Such confessions of faith or creeds, however, should not be used as tests in connection with any part of the life of the church, either of its membership or its ministry. They should not be regarded as final in form or absolute in value. The changes in the details of belief which the history of doctrine reveals should make every man humble in his view of the degree to which he has attained to a perfect understanding of final truth, and no one should do anything to hinder the people of later times from immediately applying such new phases of the truth as they should discover. Some diversity of views among thoughtful people is a thousand times more likely to lead to a real perception of the truth than a thorough conformity, and those whose lives are governed by the purpose to become Christlike in their faith in God and relations with men, are the best material for the membership of any church, no matter in how many minor ways they may differ.

83. The pastors or ministers of the church should be such as have, in addition to the qualifications proper to membership, such ability and preparation, intellectual and otherwise, as shall best fit them for their special duties.—It will hardly be necessary to say that the first qualifications for the ministry should be those of Christlike character. While we cannot expect it in perfect development,

there must be present at least the germs of the character of Jesus and something of the "fruit of the spirit," and this must be far enough in its growth to exclude the greater and coarser sins that are universally condemned and the presence of which in the life of a religious leader must be fatal to his influence.

It is of very great importance to the life and progress of the church that its leaders shall be those with the peculiar talents and the special preparation which shall best fit them for their tasks. A preacher should have some gift of public utterance, naturally, and this should be carefully trained so as to enable him to inspire and instruct people in the best way, and so that he shall attract them to his church and they shall enjoy his sermons. For if they do not enjoy them, they are unlikely to hear them at all, even if present in the room. A teacher must first be thoroughly instructed himself in the truth which is to be taught, the difficulties which are likely to arise in the minds of his hearers in the reception of the truth, the special problems of the day to which the truth must be applied, and he must also have something of the gift as well as the training in method, to impart his knowledge to others, and help them to make it theirs. And a pastor must have the personal graces which will enable him to sympathize with people of all grades and classes, and win their confidence and affection,

that he may help them in the best way. The most thorough possible preparation for the work of the ministry will not be superfluous even in the smaller fields of labor, and the entering upon the regular ministry of the church by those whose preparation is very partial or one-sided, or lacking altogether, although they may have a religious fervor or a gift of ready and interesting speech and even a deep consecration, should be discouraged. In all other lines of work, the value and necessity of thorough preparation is recognized. It should be as fully recognized in the ministry.

84. Ministers and candidates for the ministry should not be required to assent to definite, detailed statements of doctrine.—It is still a very common requirement, although a very dangerous and hurtful one, that ministers or candidates for ordination to the ministry should declare their belief in, and promise to teach a body of, doctrines, generally formulated some generations or even centuries in the past and stated in the language of discarded systems of thought. Many of the larger denominations of Christians are today in a very humiliating position in this use of their doctrinal standards. The best schools of theology no longer do or can teach all the forms of doctrine embodied in these confessions of the past, and the best-educated candidates for the ministry cannot give to them their hearty and unqualified assent.

Sometimes they openly express their dissent and still, in spite of contrary rules, are ordained to the ministry. More often, probably, they accept the creed with "mental reservations" or with interpretations of it which they know to be essentially different from those intended by the framers of the creed and understood by many of the members of the church.

There should probably be an examination of candidates for the ministry with regard to their faith as well as character and other qualifications. But this should be conducted by those who themselves are the best trained in the knowledge of theology, and without requiring conformity to any statement of doctrine which has been either inherited from the past or arranged so as to continue the traditional statements of belief, not because they are true but because a departure from them would excite strife or opposition on the part of the conservative and uninformed elements in the church. The church of today needs to have its conscience quickened with regard to strict adherence to truth—to have a great deal higher desire to find and teach the truth, to accept what God is ready to teach her, than to cherish the beliefs which have been handed down by generations of pious but fallible mortals, regardless of whether God has shown to this generation something truer and better or not. It is a great deal better to be right

than "orthodox" and to have a teachable mind than a fixed body of doctrine, however reverend from age and sacred associations.

85. **The church is the organization charged with the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, and it must not rest until every human being has come into that kingdom and voluntarily accepted the rule of the spirit of Christ for his life.**— Every organization which exists for the fundamental purpose of promoting the life of love to one personal, righteous, loving God and to all men is properly a part of the church. Hence the church is the only organization or collection of organizations which has this work to do for the world. But this work is the greatest conceivable work for humanity, and everything else that is good must be related to it or molded according to its principles before the highest conditions of human welfare can be attained. It must furnish the spirit and energy which shall make every work for the improvement of society possible and actual, and this must be primarily by propagating the best faith and illustrating its effects by the most loving and helpful life. The mission of the church, then, is to all mankind, and it must be satisfied with nothing less than the salvation of every human being. This may not mean the disappearance from the world of all the religious customs and great names and forms of faith which are now considered as outside

of, or opposed to, Christianity, but it will mean the expulsion from all forms of religion of everything false, base, and superstitious, the readjustment of emphasis on the various forms of religion so that the spiritual and essential shall be recognized as such and the addition to any existing form of religion of that which it lacks in order to meet the deepest needs of men and which may be found in other forms of religion. Whether this can be done without putting Jesus into the center of all religion as it is in Christianity, we cannot say for the coming millenniums, but we can at present imagine nothing else that would in any degree be a satisfactory substitute. This must mean finally, perhaps many centuries hence, perhaps sooner than we have faith to hope, that men everywhere will come to agree on the most important elements of faith and principles of life, and, under whatever name or form, to worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and receive from his Spirit and hold toward him that which shall truly be the best faith showing itself in the Christlike life.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

BOOKS FOR REFERENCE

BIBLES

For general purposes it is very desirable that the student should have the Bible in the Revised Version. The marginal references will often be found very useful in finding other passages bearing on the same topics.

BIBLE DICTIONARIES

Every student of Christianity should have access to, and if possible own, a good modern Bible dictionary. Well-equipped public or college libraries should have Hastings' *Bible Dictionary* in five volumes, published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, and Scribner, New York. For students, a good one-volume dictionary will supply the most important needs. *A Standard Bible Dictionary* by Jacobus, Funk & Wagnalls, and Hastings' one-volume *Bible Dictionary* by the same editor and publishers as the larger one, the articles, however, being much briefer and by different authors from those writing for the larger one, are both good.

CONCORDANCE

A good and complete concordance is a necessity in proper study of the Bible. Two good English concordances are Cruden's and Young's. The latter is more useful for the scholar and should be in institutional libraries. Cruden's is cheaper and may be sufficient for private libraries.

Nave's *Topical Bible*, printed by Eaton & Mains, is better than any concordance in showing the Bible texts bearing on a given topic, as, to a large extent, the passages bearing on a given subject are printed in full.

SCIENCE

Sir Oliver Lodge's *The Substance of Faith*, Harper, New York, gives a very helpful view of Christian Doctrine from the standpoint of an eminent scientist.

THEOLOGY

Two very good books for a deeper knowledge of Christian doctrine in more technical form for Christians of today are Clarke's *An Outline of Christian Theology*, and Brown's *Christian Theology in Outline*, both published by Scribner. The latter is especially complete as a presentation of Christian teaching as it was developed and maintained in the past and modified by historical forces down to the present, showing the relation of present to past views of Christianity. A teacher using this textbook in a group would do well to make frequent use of one or both of these more technical books to supplement his own knowledge and develop his thought.

OTHER RELIGIONS

Some knowledge of other religions is necessary for the intelligent defender of Christianity today. For this purpose Menzie's *History of Religion* (Scribner) is a very useful handbook. Another book of quite unique value, which gives a view only of the principal present-day rivals of Christianity, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Confucianism, particularly in their present forms, and with a description of their results in social life is *The Light of the World*, by Robert E. Speer. It is written with the missionary interest predominant and is readily obtainable where missionary books are sold.

OTHER BOOKS

References to other books are given in the following notes, and an extensive bibliography will be found in Brown's book above referred to.

APPENDIX II

NOTES, REFERENCES, AND QUESTIONS

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING

It is strongly recommended that where this book is used as a class textbook the students be required to look up at least the Bible references given in the following notes and copy into notebooks enough of each passage so that its significance and bearing on the subject will readily be recalled. The student should also explain in his notes *how* the Bible passage bears on the topic under discussion, and, if there is any question as to its meaning, what interpretation seems the most reasonable. He should be encouraged to find other Bible passages bearing on the subject and report them in his notebook, whether they seem to confirm the positions taken in this textbook or to oppose them. For this purpose a good concordance and topical Bible will be found of great value.

The questions and topics for further consideration may be used for essays, for reports assigned to different class members, for expansion in the notebooks, and for class discussion.

For convenience, the notes are divided into chapters and sections corresponding to the foregoing text.

CHAPTER I

1. Compare with definition of religion here given, definitions and discussions in dictionaries, encyclopedias, in introductory chapter of Menzies, *History of Religion*, etc.

* Bible references: Acts 17:22–31, especially vss. 26–28. See also references for section 2, and Luke 10:25–28.

For further consideration—

(*a*) What illustrations can you give, from Christian churches, of overemphasis on one of the three phases of religion—emotional, intellectual, and volitional or ethical—to the neglect of the other two and injury of life? (*b*) Describe cases of which you know, of serious-minded people who have been called irreligious, and show (i) why they were so-called, and (ii) how they were really religious. (*c*) Is real irreligiousness anything more than a failure to take life seriously at all, an absence of principle, purpose, thoughtfulness, a mere floating on the currents from day to day? (*d*) Name some of the most important values to individuals and to society of the best forms of religion which you know.

2. The principles of the harmonious development of the individual life, the nature of the *summum bonum*, or highest good, the road to happiness, the relative value of various forms of individual satisfaction and of the relation of the individual to others, are considered in treatises on ethics and cannot be discussed here at length. A careful study of ethics should, however, form a part of the education of every intelligent person.

Bible references: Pss. 1; 15; 37:4, 9 ff., 91; Lev. 26:3 ff.; Deut. 7:12 ff.; Prov. 3:7–10 and *passim;* Matt. 5:1–10; 19:27–29; Mark 10:28–30; Luke 6:20–26; I Tim. 4:8; Rom. 14:17; I Cor. 10:23, 24; I John 3:7; Isaiah 1:11–17; Ezek., chap. 18; Mic. 6:18; Matt. 5:48; 7:21; 22:37–40; 25:31–46; Rom. 2:2–16; I Cor., chap. 13; Jas. 1:27; 2:20; Rev. 21:8. These references indicate (1) the value of religion for the satisfaction of the individual in the various phases of his nature, physical and spiritual, and (2) the primary place of *righteousness* in true religion. Note that the Book of Job is concerned with the question why the righteous man sometimes endures great affliction.

For further consideration—

(*a*) Can we expect the best religion to enable every individual who accepts it to enjoy *complete satisfaction* in life, in its every aspect, even though it is lived among people many of whom have not accepted that religion; or must we judge religion from the standpoint of the individual, more from its *tendency* to give satisfaction and its principles of life, than from what it actually accomplishes in a given case? (*b*) Is the best way to judge of the value of a form of religion to consider its success in helping those who accept it toward *righteousness?* (*c*) What forms of religion do you know which have little or no concern for the promotion of righteousness, for the sake of society, but are concerned only with the gaining of individual satisfaction in one or more forms?

3. On Buddhism and Mohammedanism, compare works of Menzies and Speer referred to in Appendix I. The social conditions resulting from these religions, as described by Speer, are peculiarly significant.

For further consideration—

(*a*) Read what you can from the Koran (in English translation) and compare it, or descriptions of it in other books, with the Bible. (*b*) Compare the most famous teachings of Gautama (the Buddha) with those of Christ. (*c*) What evils in social conditions have been approved by the church (Christian), or considerable portions of it, in the past, and what are still tolerated by it? (*d*) What is there in the form of worship, faith, or government of Christian churches which tends to maintain some of these unrighteous social conditions?

5. In looking up the references to show the nature of the teaching of Jesus, as well as in any study of the four gospels, it will be well to have in mind the following points. Many references to Matthew have duplicate or parallel passages in the other gospels. In order readily to see the parallel

passages of the Gospels, it is very desirable to have a "Harmony of the Gospels" such as that of Stevens and Burton, published by the Association Press. The Gospels give us the accounts of the words of Jesus as they were remembered by those who had heard them or reports of them, and recorded a number of years after Jesus was gone from the earth. The words recorded are doubtless some of those which were most impressive and regarded by those who heard them as most significant and characteristic of his teaching. They were not fully understood by his disciples, still less, probably, by others to whom they were repeated; and thus doubtless they have been imperfectly and incorrectly reported in some cases, in the Gospels as we have them. The Fourth Gospel was written much later than the others and probably represents the spirit of Jesus and the effect which his life had upon the thought of his disciples and the early church more vividly, while reproducing his actual words less accurately than the other gospels.

Bible references: Matt. 5:1–12; 6:25–34; 11:2–6, 16–19, 28, 29; Luke 5:29–35; John 4:14; 5:26; 5:40; 6:35, 48; 10:10. See also some of the references for section 2. For works of bodily healing see the Gospels *passim*.

6. Bible references: Matt. 5:38–48; 7:1, 2, 12, 16–20; Luke 6:38; John 13:35; Rom. 13:8–10; I Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19–23; Matt. 3:15; 4:17; chaps. 5 to 7, especially 7:15–23; 9:2; 10:34–38; 15:17–20; 18:7–9; 19:16–21; 20:25–28; 25:31–46, and passages about kingdom of Heaven or kingdom of God in the Gospels, and passages about "life" or "eternal life" in John, for which see concordance.

For further consideration—

(*a*) Would a man be justified in obeying any God whose commands were not perfectly righteous? (*b*) If I did something in (supposed) response to a command of God

which I knew would injure my neighbor, could it be from any motive other than a selfish one, i.e., to gain the approval of God with its advantage for myself at the expense of my neighbor? And if not, must I not hold it to be *wrong*, whatever assurance I think I have that it is God's command? (*c*) Is it a safe principle to assume that what is plainly right to my conscience is God's command to me, whatever others may think? (Cf. sections 23 and 44.) (*d*) Was the kingdom of Heaven which Jesus preached something to come after earthly life or in it? (What shall we think about the prayer Jesus taught—"Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done *on earth*," etc.?) (*e*) Did Jesus say anything about hell except in connection with warnings against evil life on earth? Did he suggest any way of escape from hell except through the avoidance of the evil life on earth? (*f*) In John the mission of Jesus is represented as being mainly to give eternal life to men. Is it something to begin after death or to enjoy while alive on earth? (*g*) Some have thought that Jesus' principal work was to get men to believe that he was the Messiah or the Son of God, and that the evidence for these "claims" of Jesus was to be found in his miracles. Did Jesus *generally* encourage or discourage the attributing to him of the title Messiah, the attempt to make him king, or to consider him what the people thought the Messiah would be? (See Mark 9:33–37; 8:26, 30.) (*h*) Did Jesus seek opportunity to work miracles or avoid it? When asked for miracles to prove his authority, what was his answer? (See Matt. 12:38–40; Mark 8:11, 12.) (*k*) Were the miracles mainly works of love and mercy and thus the signs of divine character; or works of power, and signs of peculiar authority and title? The author of the Fourth Gospel speaks of them as signs. Of what were they signs? Does *Jesus* speak of them as signs?

7. In studying the teaching of Jesus with reference to tradition, the Scriptures, etc., as well as in other matters, we must be careful not to take literally what he did not mean literally. See notes on section 23.

Bible references: Matt. 5:21, 22, 27, 28, 31–34, 38, 39, 43, 44. Cf. with these passages Deut. 24:1, 3; Lev. 19:12, 18; Num. 30:2; Exod. 21:24. See further Matt. 12:1–14; Mark 7:1–23; Matt. 15:1–20; 19:3–9; 21:23–32.

For further consideration—

(*a*) What evils are today sometimes defended on the ground of Bible passages or religious tradition? (*b*) Show how Jesus' rejection of, or opposition to, religious custom and tradition was one of the principal causes of his crucifixion.

8. A book of great interest and value on the subject of the conflict of tradition with truth in religion and especially in Christianity is *Religions of Authority and the Religion of the Spirit*, by Auguste Sabatier (London: Hodder & Stoughton; New York: Doran).

For further consideration—

Compare the value of the character of Christ as a religious ideal with that of other founders of religion or leaders of sects making claim to special supernatural authority, etc., as Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Mrs. Eddy, Dowie, Elijah Sanford.

9. Cf. also section 16 and chap. iii, and first part of Tennyson's "In Memoriam."

Bible references: John 1:18; Rom. 8:24, 25; I Cor. 2:9; 12:4, 8, 9; II Cor. 5:7; Heb. 1:1; I Pet. 1:7, 8. Note that where faith is enjoined or referred to in the Bible, it is concerned with things which could not be known through the senses.

In these sections a necessary technical distinction is made between faith and knowledge. We must not expect

this distinction, which concerns primarily the *technical* use of these words for the denoting of two different ways of coming to opinions, to be generally recognized in religious literature, for example, in the Bible.

10. Bible references: On the relation of religion to this present life: Job 42:10–17; Ps. 34:9, 10; Ps. 121 and many references under section 2; on truthfulness in describing experience: Isa. 5:20; I Pet. 3:15.

For further consideration—

(*a*) What apparently mutually contradictory beliefs do you know to be held by the same people? (*b*) What beliefs do you know to be taught in the name of religion which seem to contradict common human experience? (*c*) What things do you know to have been taught as the will or revelation of God which were quite inconsistent and irreconcilable with qualities which you were taught belonged to the character of God? (*d*) How may Tennyson's words be true that

> There's more true faith in honest doubt,
> Believe me, than in half the creeds!

(*e*) Is it really possible for a man to believe two statements to be true which he *sees* are absolutely contradictory to each other?

11.

For further consideration—

(*a*) In what other departments of thought and life besides religion is the tendency noticeable among mature persons to preserve old views unchanged when better ones are offered? (*b*) Why should this conservative tendency be stronger in distinctively *religious* thought than in other departments of thought? (*c*) What cases do you know of people abandoning Christianity for some fad religion, and how can you explain this action? Is this any real argument against true Christianity?

12. Bible references: Matt. 7:15–20 and Heb., chap. 11. See also references under section 2 and note the requirement and use of *faith* in the healing works of Jesus and the apostles.

For further consideration—

(*a*) Illustrate the possibility of different rational conclusions from the same facts, by cases of different conclusions as to the character of a person arrived at by different interpretations of the same actions, and in any other ways you can. (*b*) Illustrate the different views of the world, or of a part of experience, caused by differences in mood or in health or in temporary circumstances of a given person. (*c*) What factors would you suggest in explanation of the recent statement of Judge Lewis L. Fawcett of Brooklyn, N.Y.: "Approximately 2,700 cases have been brought before me in my five and a half years of service on the bench. During all this time I have never had to try a man who was, at the time of the alleged offense, or ever had been, an active member of the church"? (*d*) Point out the different tendencies for the interpretation of the universe and the determination of life of those who hold as the most significant phenomena in experience each one of the following and subordinate the rest: pleasure, beauty, thought, matter, conscience and moral relations.

13. Bible references: Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:7; Ps. 139:1–5, 17, 18; John 1:1–4, 9; 5:30; 7:17, 26, 27; Luke 12:54–57; Gal. 5:22, 23. Note in regard to Matt. 21:23–32 that the reason for Jesus' question with regard to the baptism of John and refusal to answer the question as to his own authority was that in both cases the appeal was to the conscience. If they had recognized John's baptism as from heaven because the Spirit of God within them, speaking through their consciences, approved it, they would have recognized Jesus' authority even more quickly.

CHAPTER II

14 and 15. In reference to the date and authorship of the different books of the Bible and the history of the formation of the "canon" of the Old and New Testaments, see articles in modern Bible dictionaries on the separate books, and on Old Testament Canon and New Testament Canon. On the origin and growth of the Old Testament see the very useful, popular book *The Making of the Bible*, by A. E. Dunning (Boston: Pilgrim Press).

Bible references: I Kings 18:1–40; Job 23:3 ff.; Ps. 42:1–3; Isa. 55:8, 9; Judges 6:36–40; Gen. 15:12; 28:10–17; Matt. 12:58; 16:1; John 2:11; I John 1:1–4.

For further consideration—

(*a*) What religious experiences do you know people to have had, on the ground of which they have assumed that every item of a system of religious doctrine was absolutely true? (*b*) What do we know about the causes of dreams which would take from them the mysterious or supernatural character which has often been attributed to them? (*c*) Should we be more confident of a message from God in some unusual or inexplicable experience in a dream or trance or other abnormal psychological state, or in clear thoughts of what was right and good which come when our bodies are healthy and our minds clear? (*d*) How many books of the Bible claim or seem to claim to be descriptions of supernatural revelations made through dreams, trances, etc.? (*e*) Should it lessen our admiration and love for the Bible and confidence in its truth to find some of its thoughts anticipated or expressed in other literature and in connection with other forms of religion? (*f*) If God's Spirit is constantly active in the world, and in the past inspired men to utter great spiritual and religious truths during a period of a thousand years, would it seem natural or unnatural, in a world of ever-changing circumstances and ever-new prob-

lems, for such inspiration to be continued down to the present and future? (*g*) What phenomena which had no really Christian characteristics have been looked upon as special evidence of the influence of the Holy Spirit in recent times?

16. Bible references: Jer. 7:13, 25; 11:7, etc.; Mic. 6:8; Heb. 1:1, 2; Gal. 5:22, 23; Exod. 3:1–12; Isa. 1:24; chap. 6; Jer. 1:1, 2; Ezek. 1:3; 2:1—3:11; the Book of Jonah; Amos 7:10–17; Luke 1:1–4; II Pet. 1:21 and opening verses in Minor Prophets and New Testament epistles, indicating consciousness that speakers or writers are messengers of God.

For further consideration—

(*a*) Is there any more reason for expecting a priori (that is, before examining the facts to see what is actually the case) that God would give to men a written revelation of his nature and will, perfect in every way, than that he would preserve such revelation perfect in its text, and guarantee the perfection of translations of it and interpretations of it by religious teachers, or that he should give to every man perfect eyes, perfect hearing, and a mind which should understand perfectly every truth presented to it? (*b*) Of what value is the *search* for, and *struggle* to obtain, knowledge of various sorts in the development of mind and character? Is there a similar value in the *effort* to attain to the highest religious truth, which perhaps has not yet been completely attained by any human being? (*c*) What is the significance of the "laboratory method" in present-day education? Does it mean that those who know the truth leave the ignorant to find it out for themselves without any assistance, or that they "reveal" it to the students in the way best calculated to develop their mental powers and impress the truth upon them? Does God use the "laboratory method" in educating the race?

17. Bible references: Isa. 35:8; Matt. 15:14; 23:13, 16 ff.; John 7:17.

19. Let the student, with the help of Bible dictionary and concordance and articles on Palestine, geography, climate, etc., make lists, giving references and at least a part of the passage referred to of: (*a*) the various physiographical features referred to, especially where the reference is poetical or striking, as to mountain, sea, cave, etc.; (*b*) the features of air and upper regions, as storm, lightning, stars and constellations, etc.; (*c*) the different forms of animal life, wild and tame, birds, insects, etc.; (*d*) the different forms of vegetable life, flowers, trees, grains, etc.; (*e*) the different kinds of minerals, gold, silver, etc.; (*f*) the different occupations of men and women, soldier, shepherd, weaver, etc.; (*g*) the different nations, races, countries, and cities of the world, in so far as they still exist or are known in history outside of, as well as in, the Bible; (*h*) the different forms of building, shelter, furniture, tools and instruments for various purposes; (*k*) references to babies and children and their special interests and occupations.

20. Bible references: Gen. 28:20; 41:28 ff.; Lev. 26: 3–13; I Kings 17:1; 18:1.

For further consideration—

(*a*) Which would be the greater God, one who was interested in the petty details of the daily life and struggle of each individual and pleased to hear and answer prayer about such matters, or one who was not at all concerned about such things, but only about the general trend of civilization, or about the honor paid to him in religious assemblies, etc.? (*b*) Which man is likely to have the more vivid, constant, and effective faith in God, the one who prays only on Sundays when led by the minister, or the one who maintains regular family and private prayer in which he

presents the personal petitions which embody his particular needs? (*c*) Let the student make lists, as called for in notes on last section, above, of references to (i) common bodily needs and means of their satisfaction, varieties of food, clothing, etc., such as bed, sleep, bread, shoes; (ii) diseases, sicknesses, means, instances and promises of restoration to health, etc.; (iii) desires, pleasures, passions, etc., whose satisfaction is regarded as legitimate under proper conditions, as sexual affection, friendship, feasting, dancing, singing, enjoyment of beauty, etc.; (iv) institutions for the promotion of justice, social welfare, etc., government, courts, synagogues, means of education or provision for instruction, worship, protection, etc.; (v) some of the most important injunctions for the maintenance of law and order, justice, peace, etc., which are still recognized as necessary moral laws.

21. Those who are familiar with the thought of past generations about the Bible will recognize the fact that the position taken in this book differs in some important respects from the traditional one. The former position was that the original texts of the sixty-six books which make up our Bible were written by God himself, through the hands of men indeed, but without the slightest admixture of human error, limitation, or inaccuracy of any sort, thus making it the "Word of God" in a sense that no other written document ever was or could be. The argument in support of this position may be briefly summed up in this way: Claims are made by various writers in both Old and New Testaments to speak for God or that which God has said to them. Jesus and the New Testament writers assume the Old Testament to be "God's Word" in this peculiar sense. The writers of New Testament books, being apostles of Jesus, had special divine authority and power to write the "Word of God," which none less closely related to him could have,

and they claim God's authority for their writings. The divine authority of some of the writers of both Old and New Testaments was confirmed by their power to work miracles. Finally, the Bible has had in history such power to transform both individual and social life that it must be a revelation of God, and therefore all claims made in it for any part of it, of truth or authority, must be true, for if they are not true, their authors were impostors, which is inconceivable in view of the effect which the Bible has had in the world.

Space will permit only a very brief comment on these arguments. In the first place, a careful study of the positions taken in this book will show the needs and reasons which have led men to think of the Bible in this peculiar way, and how in fact the Bible does meet these needs. Thus it is seen that there is a true sense in which the Bible is the Word of God or a revelation from God. But the study of the Bible in recent times which has been more careful and thorough and in the light of more consistently spiritual principles than ever before, has shown that the human weaknesses, errors, and limitations of its human authors are by no means excluded—that it is a divine revelation of marvelous power in spite of these human elements. A few words must therefore be said to show that the "claims" for divine authority in the Bible are not inconsistent with this position.

The Old Testament books were selected after a long process of testing and choosing of those books which were found most helpful in the religious life of the Jews, and they were thus gradually separated from other literature, some of which would be just as valuable for us as some of that which was retained. They were not selected by scientific methods, nor by miracle of any sort, but by their suitability to various needs of the people, patriotic, liturgical, ethical, and religious. By the time of Christ, on account of the

religious use and high value of these writings, they had come to be regarded as such an "infallible" perfect revelation from God as later the whole Bible was thought to be. This attitude is assumed by all the New Testament writers, and, so far as we know, by Jesus in his public utterances. Centuries later, the literature of the early church was thus collected after a similar process of testing and sifting, and in time was thought to have the same divine origin and authority as that attributed to the Old Testament. An impartial study of the New Testament writings will show that no such claim is made in them, i.e., that they are perfect, without human error, etc., as was afterward made for them. The most careful research into the history of the books leaves the authorship of many of them doubtful, and without the authority which (without any biblical justification) it is assumed would belong peculiarly to apostles of Jesus. Their value for us then is intrinsic, and not due to apostolic authorship primarily. If we have no guaranty against human error in the writers of the New Testament, then their view of the Old Testament cannot bind us. As to the teachings of Jesus, let us remember: (1) They come to us through the medium of writers who mistakenly believed the Old Testament to have a perfection which it is now seen it never had, and who would thus be likely to assume the same belief on the part of Jesus. (2) Where Jesus is represented as using the Old Testament in his argument, the truth of his teaching in no case depends on the perfection and superhuman authority of the words of the passage quoted, but is justified by the reason and conscience apart from them. (3) While Jesus insisted that he was come to fulfil the "law and the prophets" (that is, the Old Testament Scriptures), his actual use of them was quite inconsistent with the theory of such absolute perfection, and was in complete harmony with the principles of the

use of the Bible presented in this book. (See section 7 and notes upon it.)

Such phrases in the Old Testament as "Thus saith the Lord" must be considered to be formulae used by the prophets and writers to direct attention to the truth of their words, which they were confident were from God, as true ministers and preachers of today must be confident if they would preach effectively. There is no hint in any Old Testament book that the message from God was thought to be without such limitations as would be natural to its proclamation by a fallible man.

A proper understanding of the real authority of the Bible, proved by its immense value in history, and approving itself to every honest individual who will use it rightly, will make it in the future a far more potent instrument in the hands of God for the revelation of his will to men, than it has been under the misunderstandings of the past. The way to use the Bible rightly is briefly explained in chap. iii.

CHAPTER III

22. In regard to creation and flood stories, see parallels in Babylonian myths, appendices of Kent, *Beginnings of Hebrew History* (Scribner). For references to sources in compilation of history, see I Chron. 29:29; II Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 32:32; etc. For evidence of use of common sources in the composition of the first three gospels, called the "Synoptists," see any "Harmony of the Gospels," e.g., Stevens & Burton's, or Kerr's, the latter published by the American Tract Society.

23. As illustrating the necessity of the use of reason and moral judgment in the application of Bible teaching, we may consider Matt. 5:27–42 and 6:19. Regarded as positive rules for action, to be literally obeyed, they may lead, as they have done, to the mutilation of one's body, to the

maintenance of marriage bonds between two people when one of them was worthless or cruel and separation was justified if not required by the law of God in the heart and reason; to the keeping-apart of people who would have been made happier and better and of more use in the world if they had been married, to the unwise refusal to take oaths in court or oaths of loyalty to the government, to yielding without resistance to the violence of criminals and to carelessness in the use of money, improvidence, laziness, and shiftlessness. And yet all these teachings contain important moral principles, just as valuable and necessary today as ever. Interpreted by the reason and conscience, these passages teach that one should avoid temptation, even at the cost of painful sacrifice; should regard marriage as a relation entered into for life and to be maintained in love and purity with the utmost endeavor; should speak the truth so faithfully and constantly that no oath could increase the confidence of others in one's words; should have love in his heart for everyone, the hostile and dangerous as well as the friendly, and in the treatment of the hostile should never be actuated by desire for revenge but only for the best good of the enemy, perhaps the criminal; should not worry about the future, but, having done all that circumstances made possible to provide for it, should trust God's care, and give greater attention to the more important side of life, that of character, than to the matter of food and clothes.

For further consideration—

Take some chapter in Leviticus, e.g., chap. 25, and see: (*a*) what commands, there, may be helpfully applied to present-day conditions; (*b*) what moral principles whose validity we recognize are involved in commands not completely applicable to our conditions or justified by our conscience; (*c*) what commands involve elements of which we today must disapprove; (*d*) what injunc-

tions seem to involve no moral principle but only an economic one.

24.

For further consideration—

Pick out, in the first chapters of Genesis, (*a*) verses giving teachings about God and his relations to the world and men which seem to be valuable elements of the best faith in their natural meaning; (*b*) those which have no evident religious value in themselves but would have been interesting and natural explanations of conditions of the world, man, and society at a time when they were current and there were no better; (*c*) those which, taken in their natural meanings, involve conceptions of God or nature no longer possible to us.

25. Is there any progress in the thought of God between (1) Gen. 6:6, 7; 8:21; I Sam. 26:19; and (2) Ps. 139; John 4:24; I John 4:8?

26. The thesis of this section, which may at first appear somewhat complicated, might be stated thus: To use the Bible as a Christian book, we must find how a Christlike *God* is revealed in it. It is the one, eternal God whom man needs to find. Really to find this God is to find salvation and eternal life. (Cf. John 17:3, and on the subject of the revelation of God in Jesus, chap. vi and section 31 in chap. iv.)

CHAPTER IV

27. Mormonism is frankly tritheistic or polytheistic, besides having degradingly sensual conceptions of the gods and their relations to men, from which flow sensual conceptions of human life. It is to be noted that the Mormon theology still and necessarily makes polygamy a divine principle of life and therefore something to be expected in ideal human society (even though suspended for a time in

practice, out of respect for civil laws made by their opponents, whether the charge is true that it is still secretly fostered by the Mormon church or not).

Bible references: Gen. 1:1; 17:1; Deut. 6:4; Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37; Acts 17:24; I Tim. 2:5.

28. The personality of God is assumed all through the Bible. This personality and its nature are the fundamental and most difficult problems of Christian belief, but there can be no question about the value of belief in a personal God, and no faith can properly be called Christian in which it is not central.

29. Bible references: Gen., chap. 1; Isa. 55:6–9; Ps. 102:25–27.

30 and 31. Compare, in connection with these sections, chap. vi and notes on section 26. In regard to question as to whether Jesus ever actually lived, see Case, *The Historicity of Jesus* (University of Chicago Press, 1912).

Bible references: Exod. 34:6, 7; Num. 14:18; Ezek., chap. 18; John 1:1–18; 3:16; 5:19–47; 6:38–40; 8:18, 19, 29, 42, 49, 50, 54, 55; 10:30, 37, 38; 12:44, 45, 49, 50; 13:31, 32; 14:9–11, 23, 24; 15:15, 23, 24; Rom. 3:21–26; I Cor. 1:24, 30; II Cor. 4:6; 5:18–20; Col. 1:15, 20; Heb. 1:3; I John 4:8.

32. Bible references: What is the Holy Spirit? Gen. 1:2; 2:7; Job 33:4; Ps. 139:1–5, 17, 18; John 1:9. What does God's Spirit do in and with men? Exod. 31:3; Num. 27:18; Judges 14:6; 15:14; Isa. 11:2; 61:1; Ezek. 36:7; Matt. 10:20; John 3:5–8; 14:26; 16:7, 8, 13, 14; Acts 2:37–39, 41, 42; I Cor. 12:7–11; Matt. 3:16. How shall we know the presence and work of the Holy Spirit? Matt. 12:24–28, 33; II Tim. 1:7; Gal. 5:22, 23; I John 4:1, 7, 8. Who may receive the Holy Spirit and how? Isa. 44:3; Joel 2:28, 29; Luke 11:13; John 1:9; Acts 5:32.

33 and 34. For arguments for the existence of God, see Clarke, *op. cit.*, pp. 102 ff., and Brown, *op. cit.*, chap. ix, pp. 124 ff.

Bible references: Matt. 7:17–20; 12:33–35; Heb., chap. 11; Jas. 2:14–26.

For further consideration—

(*a*) Can you suggest any different or contrary principle which would be more promotive of general human welfare in all its phases than that of the brotherhood of Man—the duty of love to all men? (*b*) Can you imagine any attitude toward the universe (i.e., any religion) that would be more in harmony with, and promotive of, this principle of love to men than the belief in a Christlike God who desired and required Christlike character in all men? (Cf. sections 70 and 76.) (*c*) Compare the countries of the world in which Christianity prevails with those in which other forms of religion prevail, as to civilization, education, culture, commerce, etc. (*d*) Compare the countries in which Roman Catholicism prevails with those in which Protestantism is strong, in the same respects. (*e*) What part have Christian missions and missionaries played in the development and improvement of India, China, Japan, Africa, Turkey? (*f*) To what extent can we regard the existence of evil social conditions in so-called Christian countries as a failure of Christianity? (*g*) What testimonies to the value of Christian faith can you get from the lives, words, and deeds of famous statesmen, rulers, generals, authors, artists, musicians, sailors, business men, etc.?

35. Bible references: Gen. 1:1—2:7; Job, chaps. 38, 39, 40, 41; Pss. 8; 19:1–6; 24:1, 2; 29; 33:6; 74:12–17; 102:25; Isa. 40:22; 42:5; 45:18; John 1:1, 2; Acts 17:24.

36. Concerning materialistic evolution and Christianity, see discussion in Fairbairn, *Philosophy of the Christian Religion* (Hodder and Stoughton).

A theory of evolution differing much from the familiar Darwinian theory is maintained by Bergson, one of the prominent philosophers of France at the present time. His *Creative Evolution* (Holt, 1911) makes life instead of matter the first principle of reality and the creative force of the world. Although his philosophy is very different from the faith of Christianity, there is much in it which throws light on problems of creation and evolution which a Christian might accept, and which may compel a general revision of ideas about the process of development of the universe. For Bergson, inert matter is not eternal, but is the inversion or interruption of life.

For further consideration—

(*a*) Which is the more reasonable and helpful faith, that God created the various forms of nature by some vocal or mental *fiat*—"Let there be"—or that by his wisdom he used various *forces* and *means* under his control to develop nature as we know it? (*b*) Is creation by *fiat* a possible positive conception for an educated person today, or is it merely of negative value to express our ignorance of means or method? (*c*) If the author of Genesis had understood and accepted the theory of evolution, could he have explained it to the people of his time? Is it conceivable that the first chapter of Genesis was *intended* to teach evolution? (*d*) Does it in any way detract from the glory of God to think that many millions of years were occupied in the bringing of the present cosmos out of an early chaos, instead of six days? (*e*) Is the question as to God's method of creation one of amount or degree of power or of the way in which he used the power? Does it belong to the realm of faith or knowledge?

37. For further discussion of the providence of God, his limitations, etc., see succeeding sections and sections 71 to 74.

Bible references: Gen. 8:1, 21, 22; Pss. 1:3; 23; 37; 91; 101; 121; Matt. 6:25–34; Acts 17:25; Rom. 8:28.

38. For further discussion of the problem of evil, see the very interesting sections on that subject in Fairbairn, *op. cit.*

Bible references: Gen. 3:17–19 (can "for thy sake" be understood as meaning "for thy good"?); Job 5:17–20; 23:10; 36:15, 16; Ps. 94:12; Prov. 3:11, 12; II Sam. 12:1–14; I Cor. 15:54–57; II Cor. 6:4–10; 11:16, 23–33; 12:7–10; Heb. 12:5–13; Jas. 1:2–4; I Pet. 1:6, 7; 4:12–14.

39. For further discussion of prayer, see sections 71 to 74. Bergson, in the work above referred to, rejects the idea of the uniformity of nature as a final principle of reality. He finds life creating forms not only new in actual existence, but unforeseeable, unpredictable, not even pre-existent in thought or idea. His argument, which is very plausible, may lead to an abandonment of the too strict principle of uniformity and make it easier to conceive of God's free action in the universe.

40. Cf. questions "for further consideration" on sections 14 and 15.

CHAPTER V

41. Bergson (*op. cit.*) maintains that consciousness in man cannot be regarded as conditioned by the brain and neural processes in any such sense as action in the lower animals is so conditioned. The brain is the "cutting edge" of consciousness in man, inseparable from consciousness just as the edge is inseparable from the knife, but no more coextensive or parallel in the one case than in the other. In man, as not in the animals, consciousness is free and the nervous system is the servant. Professor William James has made a similar suggestion. (See section 64.) Cf. also Fairbairn (*op. cit.*) on evolution of man and relation of man to the ape, etc.

42. On the subject of the freedom of human consciousness see further Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, references in index under "Man in Evolution," "Unforeseeableness," "Freedom," and the general trend of the whole book.

Bible references: Josh. 24:15; I Kings 18:21; Ezek., chap. 18; Rom. 8:29, 30; 9:11–28. It may be questioned whether Paul would have assented to any thoroughgoing system of determinism, but it is true that in the passages in Romans, here referred to, he holds to an election or predetermination of human fate and action which is not consistent with the belief in human freedom. It is worthy of note, however, that in Rom. 8:29, 30 his purpose is to encourage men in the struggle for righteousness, by assuring them of God's determination to justify and glorify those whom he foreknew would accept of his salvation, rather than to teach the doctrine of "predestination," and that in the next chapter the fate of those who do not accept God's grace is really for him a problem, to which he can only reply by questions and exclamations referring to God's sovereignty and power, and what seem to him the undeniable facts of experience.

43. Bible references: Gen. 6:5–7; Gen. 18:20, 21, 26, etc.; Exod. 32:7–14. Are these passages consistent with the idea that God knows from eternity everything which is going to happen? Notice that in Rom., chap. 9, especially vs. 19, Paul himself presents the argument against the idea of complete foreknowledge and determinism and has no logical answer to that argument.

44. Bible references: Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:6, 10, 17; Isa. 1:19, 20; Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5; Mark 12:28–34; Rom. 2:12–15; 14:13–23, especially vss. 14, 20, and 23; I Cor. 6:12; 8:4–13; 10:23—11:1; Luke 10:26; Rom. 13:1–10; Gal. 3:24.

45. Bible references: Look up marginal references

(in Revised Version) to Matt. 5:22; and article on "Gehenna" in a good Bible dictionary. (The idea of the fire of Gehenna comes from that of the *rubbish* fires of the Valley of Hinnom, and suggests the destruction of that which has become worthless, not the torturing of that which has life and possible goodness remaining.) See also I Tim. 4:2; Rom. 1:24–32; 2:8, 9; II Pet., chaps. 13, 17; Rev. 22:11, 12, 15; Matt. 12:22–37. Note that the "unpardonable sin" is the calling of works of goodness works of evil, attributing works of God's Spirit to the Evil Spirit. Such absolute failure of moral judgment could be the result only of long-practiced hypocrisy and sin, and the reason that the sin is unpardonable is that it is not realized, acknowledged, or repented of, since the whole moral nature has become corrupt. Thus the possibility of committing such a sin, or reaching such a state, is the worst punishment conceivable.

46. On the subject of this section see also sections 2 and 6 and notes and references belonging to them, and also the following:

Bible references: Isa. 53:5, 6, 10–12; Matt. 1:21; 20:25–28; Luke 15; John 1:29; Acts 13:38, 39; Rom. 6:4–14; 8:9; I Cor. 11:1; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:13–15; 5:12; Phil. 3:8–14. These passages call attention to the work of Christ to free people from sin, the necessity of following Christ, having his spirit, developing his character, etc. In addition the following are especially related to salvation as involving the forgiveness of God, and fellowship with him: Deut. 30:19, 20; Isa. 1:18; 55:6, 7; Matt. 11:28–30; Mark 2:17; Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:1, 4, 5; Col. 1:20–23.

47. Bible references: Ps. 51:13; Matt. 18:3; Luke 22:32; Acts 3:19; 2:37–42; 16:22–34; 26:9–20; Jas. 5:20; I John 3:7; Pss. 5:12; 11:7; 34:15; 37:17; Isa. 3:10; Ezek. 18; Matt. 9:13; Gen. 28:16. Note the

difference in location and in direction of movement of the two sons in the story Luke 15:11–32.

48. Bible references: Matt. 18:1–6, 10, 14; Mark 10:14, 15.

49. Bible references: Acts 2:47 (margin of Revised Version, "being saved"); Rom. 7:15–25; Phil. 3:11–14; I John 3:2, 3.

50. Bible references: Isa. 61:1–3; Rom. 1:16, 17; 3:21–28; 4:1—5:2; 11:6; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 2:1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 14; Titus 3:5–7.

51. Bible references: Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:7; Num. 16:22; 27:16; Isa. 9:6; 63:16; 64:8; Ezek. 18:4; Matt. 5:16, 48; 6:1, 4, 6, 8, etc.; Luke 15:11–32; John 6:37; Rom. 9:26. (Cf., as apparently contrary, Matt. 13:38; Eph. 2:3; I John 3:10.)

52 and 53. See section 38 and notes and references for the same, and the following:

Bible references: Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:16–21; II Sam. 12:13, 14; Ps. 103:3; Isa. 1:18; 44:22; Matt. 6:14, 15; Acts 5:31; 13:38; 26:18; Eph. 1:7; 4:32; Col. 1:14; 2:13; 3:13; Jas. 5:15; I John 1:9; 2:12.

CHAPTER VI

55. It is worthy of note that the special purpose in the Apostles' Creed and the Te Deum of calling attention to the birth of Jesus "of the virgin Mary" was not to emphasize the *virgin* birth but the *human* birth and thus the humanity of Jesus. So also Paul (whether referring to the reported virgin birth or not), in Gal. 4:4, 5, is calling attention to the humanity of Jesus. The whole gospel picture of Jesus is understandable only on the theory that Jesus was regarded as a real man by all among whom he moved, whatever else some of them came to believe about him. His death is the final incident in his humanity. The man Jesus died.

Whatever value the death of Jesus had for humanity, it must have had as the death of a man. If we think of Jesus as being in some way God himself, we cannot think of him as being God in the full meaning of the word, when he died; for the thought of a dying God, although familiar in non-Christian religions, is contradictory to the Christian conception of God.

Bible references: Limitations of man: Job 40:4; Pss. 103:14–16; 39:4–6; Isa. 2:22; Jer. 17:5; Human features or indications of human nature in Jesus: Matt. 4:1–11; 8:24; 11:19; Mark 13:32; 15:34; Luke 2:40, 52; John 4:6; 14:12; 19:28; Gal. 4:4, 5; I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 2:18; 4:15; Relation of uncertainty of punishment to sin: Eccl. 8:11.

56. Bible references: Apart from the passages about Jesus, which will be considered later, the following are related to the matter of this section: Man in the image of God and living by God's "breath" ("spirit"): Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:7; Anthropomorphisms, i.e., passages representing God as being or acting like a man in ways which we cannot now accept as literally true although they were originally understood literally: Gen. 1:3, 31; 2:2, 8, 21, 22; 3:8, 21; 6:6, 7; 7:16; 8:21; 9:13–16; 11:7; Theophanies (appearances of God) in which God is said to have appeared in human form (note that in several of the passages it is related that an "angel" or "the angel of Jehovah" appeared, but that in the course of the story in each case, in at least one place, the word "angel," i.e., messenger, drops out and it is said that Jehovah spoke, or the person looked upon Jehovah, etc. This suggests the probability that in the earlier form of the stories, the word "angel" did not appear, but that it was later inserted when it was no longer believed possible for a mortal to see God): Gen. 17:1–3, 22; 18:12, 20–22, 33; 32:24–29; Exod. 3:2 ff.; 32:10, 14, 16; 33:11, 18–23; 34:5–7; Judges 6:11–24;

13:3–22; passages suggesting superiority of God to man: Pss. 50:21; 104; Isa. 55:8, 9; John 1:18; Jas. 1:17; I John 1:5; 4:8.

57. As to the general historical value of the Gospels, see introductions to the Gospels, by best modern scholars, articles in Bible dictionaries on the New Testament, authenticity, Canon, etc., and on the "synoptic problem," and the separate gospels.

58. Bible references: John 8:46; Heb. 4:15; Acts 2:22; II Cor. 5:21; I Pet. 2:22; I John 3:5.

59. On the subject of this section see also sections 6, 30, and 31 and references for them in notes, and the following:

Bible references: Jesus' opposition to sin shown in its condemnation *and forgiveness*, etc.: Matt. 1:21; Sermon on the Mount, chaps. 5, 6, and 7; Matt. 9:1–7; 11:20–24; 21:12, 13; 23:13–39; Luke 7:36–50; chap. 15; 23:34; John 1:29; 8:1–11; 8:31–36; I John 4:10; His love for men: Matt. 9:35–38; 10:1, 7, 8; 11:4, 5; 11:28–30; 23:37; Luke 4:16–21; 6:27, and in general his works of healing for all who came to him; His suffering and death, its cause, voluntariness, purpose, results, etc.; Matt. 20:28; Luke 9:22–24; Matt. 26:26–29; John 10:15–18; Matt. 26:59; 27:18, 41, 42; Luke 23:13–25; John 11:47–53; 12:10, 19, 32, 33; 16:13, 14; Rom. 5:6–11; 5:19, 21; I Cor. 15:3; II Cor. 5:15; I Thess. 5:9, 10; Rev. 1:5; 5:9, 10.

60. On this section see the *New Testament* references to sections 30 and 31 and also the following:

Bible references: John 8:23, 26–29; 17:3; Gal. 3:25; Eph. 1:17–23; 3:14–19; Phil. 2:5–11.

61. Bible references: See section 5 and references and the following: Matt. 4:18, 19; 8:22; 10:38; 19:21; John 8:12; 10:27; 12:26; 13:14–16; 15:1–10; I Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:13, 14; I Thess. 1:6; Heb. 2:18; 4:15; I Pet. 2:21; Rev. 2:10.

For further consideration—

(*a*) What are the principles according to which we should make use of the example of Jesus as a guide to our action? Should we aim to heal by suggestion or faith, to preach in the open air, to wander from place to place, to be poor, to die a martyr's death, to remain unmarried, because he did? What difference should it make to us, in our lives, whether he was a "total abstainer," a worker for political, social, or industrial reform, a university-educated man, a believer in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, or not? (*b*) In what ways is it easier for a man to live a Christlike life today than in the time of Christ? What has Christian faith had to do with the improvement, and what is its significance for the future?

CHAPTER VII

63. See note on section 45 on Gehenna.

64. On the subject of this section and some of the succeeding ones, compare section 41 and notes, and the following books: Meyer, *Human Personality and Its Survival after Death* (Longmans Green & Co., 1907); James, *Ingersoll Lecture on Immortality* (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1900); Brown, *The Christian Hope* (Scribner, 1912).

Bible references: Mark 12:18–27; I Cor. 15:12–26; II Cor. 5:1–8; Phil. 1:21–23; I Thess. 4:13–18; Heb. 6:17–20; 11:13–16; 13:14; Rev. 2:10.

65. With regard to Bible passages which have been used as a basis for the doctrine that all who fail to attain salvation by believing certain things about Christ are to be eternally tormented, the following may be said. First, no Old Testament passages bear on such a doctrine. The word translated "hell" in the King James Version in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word "Sheol," which means the place of the dead or the grave, and it was thought of as a

place of undesirable and shadowy existence to which all, good and bad, went at death. Secondly, in the New Testament, passages referring to punishment of wicked men after death use either the word Hades or Gehenna, for "hell." Hades corresponds to the Hebrew Sheol, and refers to the place of the dead, both good and bad. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, both are in Hades, but the rich man is in a place of suffering, separated from the place of happiness where Lazarus is, by a great gulf. Nothing is said here about *eternal* suffering. In notes on section 45 we have spoken of Gehenna and its meaning. Expressions like those in Mark 9:48, "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched," are far better interpreted as referring to an unescapable process of destruction than to an unceasing torture of the indestructible. It is the worm and the fire, and not the life of the sinner that is spoken of as unending. Expressions like that in Matt. 10:28, "Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell," must be taken to mean what they say. To "destroy" is not to preserve indestructible for the sake of tormenting. A few passages, such as Matt. 25:41, 46; Jude, vs. 7; Rev. 14:10, 11; 20:10, seem to hold the idea of never-ending suffering for the wicked. We must hold them to represent the thought of men in a time when the righteousness and love of God was not so clearly realized as to make it inconceivable, as it should be for us at this time.

66. Bible references: In regard to the *body* after death, see I Cor. 15:35–58; Phil. 3:20–21. In regard to the *time* when this body is given, or the time of the resurrection, etc., see notes on section 68.

67. Bible references: John 14:2, 3; Rev. 2:7; 21:1—22:5.

68. On matters treated in this section see articles in Bible dictionaries on Judgment, Parousia (second coming of

Christ), resurrection, eschatology. The expectation is clearly shown in the New Testament, outside of the Book of Revelation, that Jesus would soon return visibly to earth, to judge it and establish his kingdom. This return was looked for confidently, but in vain, by Paul and other disciples, within their lifetime. We have good reason to believe that the teaching of Jesus on this subject was not rightly understood and taught by his disciples. We see that God is still establishing his kingdom in the same spiritual way which Jesus used when he was on the earth, and constantly judging men and nations. We have no good reason to believe that he will some time abandon this way for the way of outward compulsion by supernatural, physical force. See Sharman, *The Teaching of Jesus about the Future* (University of Chicago Press, 1909); and the following:

Bible references: Dan. 7:9–14; Matt. 10:23; 16:27; 16:28; 24:3–51; 26:64; Mark 8:38 ff.; 13:26; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:11; I Cor. 15:23; I Thess. 1:10; 4:16; II Thess. 1:7, 10; 2:1, 8; Jas. 5:7 f.; II Pet. 1:16; 3:4, 12; I John 2:28; Rev. 1:7; 20:11–15; II Cor. 5:1–8; Phil. 1:21–23; I Thess. 4:13–18; Matt. 10:15; 11:22; 12:36–41; John 12:31; Heb. 9:27; II Pet. 2:9; 3:7; I John 4:17; Rom. 2:16; 14:10; I Cor. 6:2, 3; II Tim. 4:1; I Pet. 4:5.

69. See last section and notes and references, and following passages referring to the second coming or Parousia:

Bible References: Matt. 10:23; 16:28; 24:3–44; 26:64; Mark 8:38 f.; 13:26; Luke 21:27; Acts 1:11; I Cor. 15:23; I Thess. 1:10; 4:16; II Thess. 1:7, 10; 2:1, 8; Jas. 5:7 ff.; II Pet. 1:16; 3:4, 12; I John 2:28; Rev. 1:7; John 21:22.

For further consideration—

If Jesus were to reign over all men and nations as an earthly sovereign, with his capital at Jerusalem, according

to the thought of the millennium and the early disciples' idea of the messianic kingdom, what problems as to form and method of government would be involved for our thought, and in what ways could we think of such a kingdom as being an improvement over present methods of self-government which the most advanced nations are learning and developing?

CHAPTER VIII

70. Bible references: Matt. 22:35–40; 25:31–46; Luke 10:25–37; Jas. 2:1, 14–26; I John 2:3–6, 9–11; 3:7, 10, 11, 14–18; 4:7, 8, 20, 21.

71. Bible references: Matt. 6:6–15; 26:41; Luke 18:1–14; John 16:23, 24; Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:17; I Tim. 2:1–3, 8.

72. Bible references: Matt. 7:7–11; 18:19, 20; 21:22; Mark 11:24, 25; Luke 11:5–13; I John 5:14–16.

For further consideration—

(*a*) Could a person who had *true* faith in God (i.e., who had the right belief about the nature and will of God) take Matt. 17:20 literally and ask that a mountain be moved from one place to another for the sake of the marvel and the showing of the power of faith? (*b*) In the light of I John 5:14–16 and other passages, how must we understand the apparently unlimited promises like Matt. 18:19; 21:22 and Mark 11:24, 25? (*c*) Should we consider events which surprise us on account of their unusual character, improbability, etc., if they happen after a prayer that something should be done which is fulfilled by these events, as more truly or more evidently answers to prayer than events whose occurrence seems natural, probable, or explicable?

73. Bible references: Num. 23:19; Ps. 119:89–91; Mal. 3:6; II Tim. 2:13; Heb. 6:18; Jas. 1:17; 4:3; I John 3:22.

74. Bible references: John 14:13, 14; 15:16; Jas. 1:5–8; 5:13–18.

For further consideration—

(*a*) What is the right meaning of prayer "in the name of Jesus" and what wrong ideas are often held about prayer in Jesus' name? (*b*) What are the chief spiritual blessings which we may obtain through prayer? (*c*) How would you explain the coming of these spiritual benefits as a result of prayer by the psychological influence of the prayer itself upon him who prays? (*d*) What principles as to time, manner, contents of prayer, etc., may be deduced from this understanding of the psychological relation between prayer and its results? (*e*) Is the psychological result of prayer upon him who prays, to be considered as any the less the action of God upon him, in answer to that prayer, because we can partly understand why these results follow as psychological effects? (*f*) Is there any possibility of proving that the results of prayer in bringing spiritual blessings to him who prays are *entirely* the natural reflex action of the prayer, or may we reasonably suppose that there is also a positive and added spiritual influence of God upon the suppliant, which could therefore not be obtained by any other psychological exercise?

75. Bible references: Deut. 6:6–9; Josh. 1:8; Pss. 1:2; 19:7–11; 119:9, 15, etc.; Prov. 6:20–23; Isa. 20:21; 55:11; John 8:31, 32; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:16; II Tim. 3:15, 16.

76. Bible references: Deut. 31:12, 13; II Kings 17:36; Pss. 5:7; 22:22; 27:4; 35:18; 42:4; 45:11; 48:9; 55:14; 63:1, 2; 84:1–10; 95:6; 96:8, 9; 100:1–4; 107:32; 116:17; 122:1; 149:1; Luke 4:8; Acts 2:1 ff.; Luke 4:16; Heb. 10:25; Rev. 14:7.

77. See references for section 75.

78. Bible references: John 10:32; Acts 10:38; I Tim. 2:10; 5:10; Matt. 25:34–40; Jas. 2:14–20; I Tim. 6:17,

18; Titus 3:1, 8, 14; John 15:8; Matt. 5:16; I Pet. 2:12; Jas. 1:25, 27; I Tim. 5:25; Matt. 10:42; 19:21; Heb. 10:24; I Cor., chap. 13; Luke 10:25–37; I John 3:16–23; Heb. 13:1–3; Acts 2:44, 45.

79. Bible references: Acts 6:2; Rom. 14:17; Matt. 6:31–34.

80. Bible references: Acts, chap. 15, especially vs. 28; I Cor. 12:4–31; 13:1–13; and see also sections 23, 25, and 32 and references in notes.

81 and 82. Bible references: John 10:16; 17:11, 21–23; Rom. 12:4, 5; I Cor. 10:17; 12:5, 12, 13, 26, 27; Eph. 4:4–6, 11–16.

For further consideration—

(*a*) What tests, if any, did Jesus require a man to meet that he might become one of his disciples? (*b*) What conditions keep various denominations from uniting in one, today, and how far can these hindrances be regarded as resulting from readiness to be led by God's Spirit, and how far as promoting the true interests of the kingdom of God? (*c*) What evils are there in sectarianism and denominational rivalry? (*d*) On what principles should it be possible for different denominations to agree and unite into one organization?

83 and 84. Bible references: Matt. 20:25–28; Acts 1:8; II Cor. 6:3–6; I Tim. 3:1–14; II Tim. 2:21–25; 3:14–17; Titus 1:5–14; 2:7, 8. Note that the words "bishop," "deacon," and "elder" are used in the New Testament mainly in their original sense of overseer, ministrant, and older person, not with the technical meanings and functions which have been given to them since, in the development of church organization.

85. Bible references: Matt. 4:17; 10:7; 28:19, 20; John 12:32; II Cor. 5:18, 19; Rom. 10:14, 15.

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INDEX

NOTE.—The figures in the following index refer to pages of the book, except when preceded by the sign §, which indicates "section." The material in the appendices is not indexed except in a few cases where explanations or questions throw some direct light upon the subject referred to. For further use of the notes, the reader should find the topic in the text and then look for the notes on the section in which it is treated.

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